DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 026 418 UD 007 670

By-Good, Paul

Cycle to Nowhere.

Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, D.C.
Report No-CCR-Clgh-Pub-14
Pub Date 68
Note-60p.
Available from-Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 ($.60).
EDRS Price MF-$0.50 HC Not Available from EDRS.
Descriptors-Agriculture, Child Welfare, *Civil Rights, Cooperatives, Economic Disadvantagement, Farmers, Federal Laws, Health Conditions, Negro Education, Negro Employment, *Negroes, *Racial Discrimination, Racism, School Segregation, Welfare Problems, Welfare Services
Identifiers-Alabama, Commission on Civil Rights

This report describes the findings of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights hearings in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1968. A comparison with the report of the 1958 hearings in the same city is made throughout the document. It is noted that there has been minimal, if any, improvement in the discrimination against the black people of Alabama in the past decade. The testimony at the hearings dealt with the cycle of poverty, infant starvation and child health problems, segregated education, agriculture, a Negro-owned farmers cooperative, and employment and unemployment. Also included are findings about noncompliance with Federal anti-discrimination statutes, the public welfare situation, and racism. (NH)

UD 007 670 ED026418

07670 E

ycle to nowhere

U.S.
Commission
on
Civil
Rights

Clearinghouse
Publication
No. 14

U.S.
COMMISSION
ON
CIVIL
RIGHTS

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is a temporary, independent, bipartisan agency established by Congress in 1957 and directed to:

Investigate complaints alleging that citizens are being deprived of their right to vote by reason of their race, color, religion, or national origin, or by reason of fraudulent practices;

Study and collect information concerning legal developments constituting a denial of equal protection of the laws under the Constitution;

Appraise Federal laws and policies with respect to equal protection of the laws;

Serve as a national clearinghouse for information in respect to denials of equal protection of the laws; and

Submit reports, findings, and recommendations to the President and the Congress.

Members of the Commission

JOHN A. HANNAH, *Chairman*
EUGENE PATTERSON, *Vice Chairman*
FRANKIE M. FREEMAN
REV. THEODORE M. HESBURGH, C.S.C.
ROBERT S. RANKIN
WILLIAM L. TAYLOR, *Staff Director*

cycle to nowhere

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

by
Paul Good

U.S.
Commission
on
Civil
Rights

Clearinghouse
Publication
No. 14

Contents

Introduction 1

Alabama Revisited 3

Robbing the Cradle 5

Crime in the Classroom 11

Crime in the Fields 17

The Cooperatives and the Non-Cooperatives 25

Dream Weaving 29

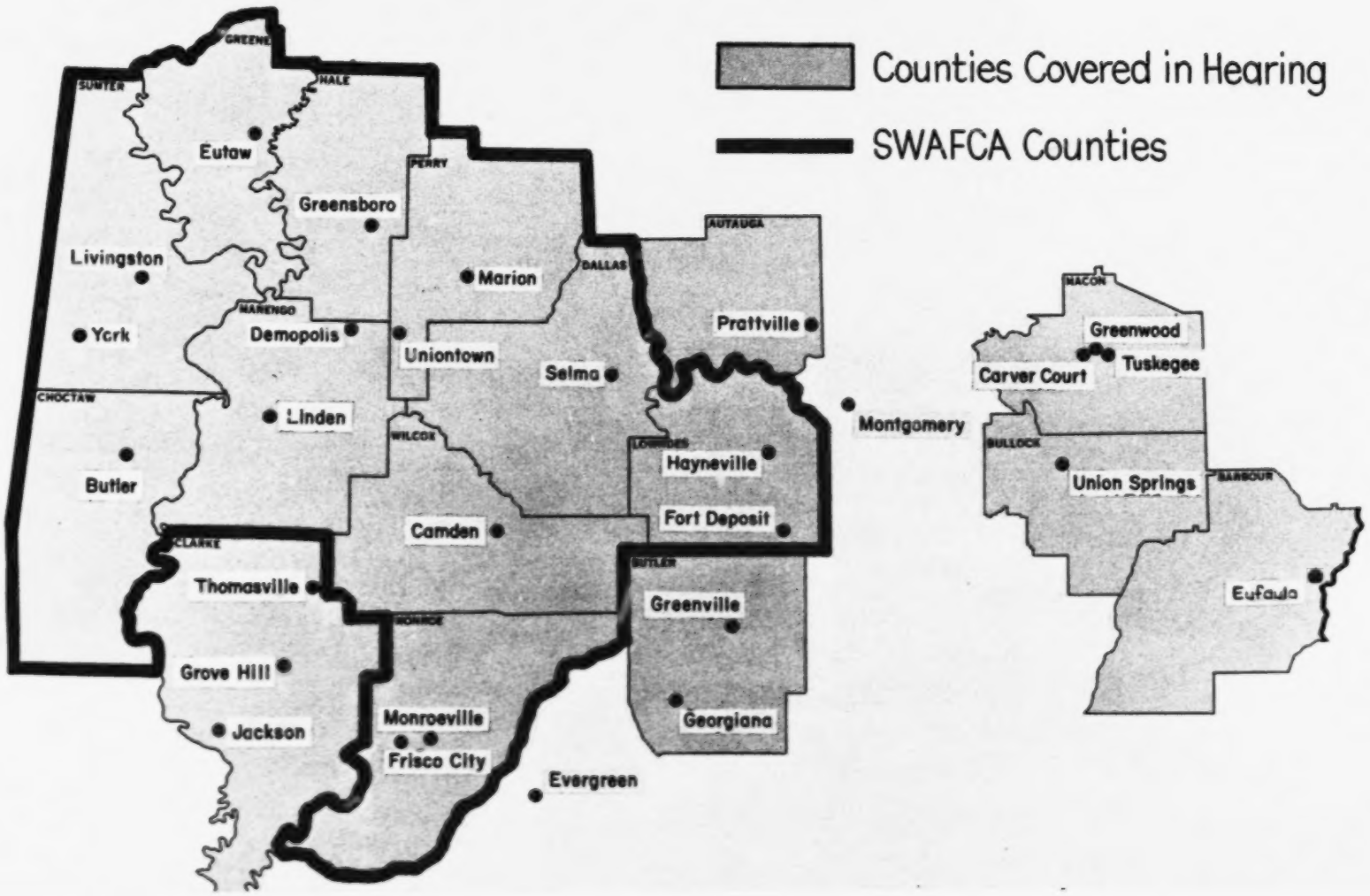
Paper Compliance 35

The Welfare State 39

"To Live in Freedom, To Die a Timely Death" 45

Since the Hearing 53

ALABAMA AND HEARING AREA



Introduction

The first hearing of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was held in Montgomery, Alabama in December, 1958, to investigate voting complaints in certain counties of that State.

On April 27, 1968, the Commission returned to Montgomery for a 5-day hearing to collect information concerning equal economic opportunity for Negroes in rural and non-metropolitan areas of Alabama. The hearing focused on 16 counties running in a belt from the Georgia State line on the East through Montgomery to Mississippi on the West.

The 1968 hearing covered the counties of Autauga, Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Sumter, and Wilcox. The population of the 16-county area in 1964 was 362,000 or about 11 percent of Alabama's total population. More than three-fifths of the population in the countries was Negro, one of the highest percentages for any area of equivalent size in the United States.

The 16-county area suffers from severe social and economic problems. Poverty is most prevalent among nonwhites. The median income for nonwhite families in 1959 was $1,279 as compared with $4,259 for white families. The level of living index for farm operative families is among the lowest in the United States. Educational achievement also is low. In 1960 nonwhites 25 years and older had a median level of education of 5.5 years while the median level for whites was 10.8 years.

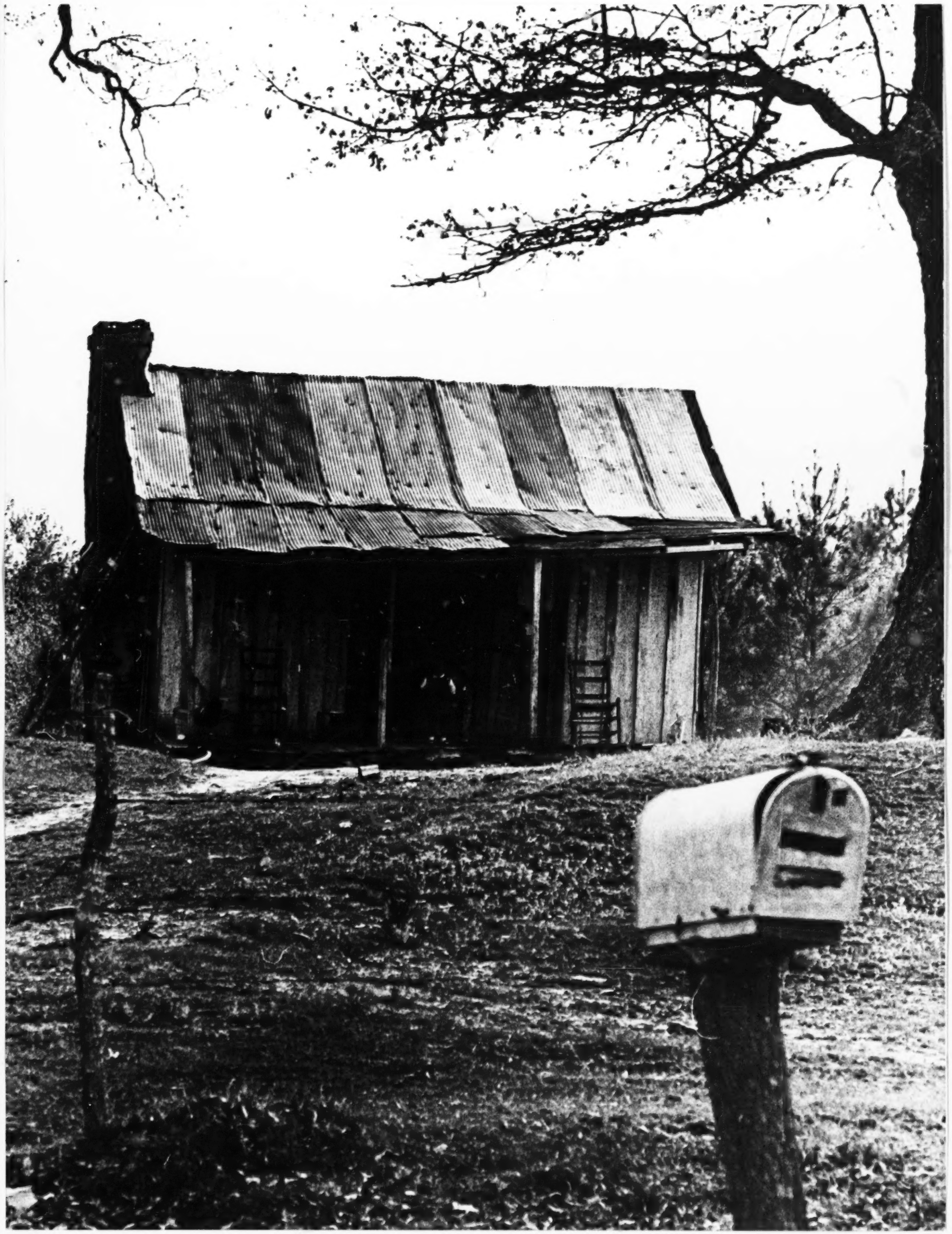
Though the economy of this area has lagged behind the rest of the State, important economic changes are taking place there. The traditional cotton crop is being replaced by livestock and dairy farming and by raising other crops such as vegetables, soybeans, and peanuts. On the whole, farms are fewer but larger and more productive. Paper, machinery, fabricated metals, and chemical plants, representing new manufacturing and service industries, have moved into the area to provide expanded job opportunities. There has been steady growth in the number of government employees.

Generally these changes portend the beginning of better times for an economically depressed area, but the black inhabitants are not benefiting from the changes nor does it appear that the new opportunities will be open to them in the future. The changes in the agricultural economy on the whole have not helped the black farmer, laborer, or small farm owner. While there has been a shift from cotton farming, for example, the Negro farmer is still largely confined to this activity. If he is a tenant or laborer on a cotton farm, he is being replaced by machinery. If the Negro farmer owns his land, he usually lacks adequate acreage, equipment, and knowledge to become a prosperous farm operator. Agriculture programs of the Federal Government have not been successful in helping the Negro farmer solve his economic difficulties.

Manufacturing industries in the 16-county hearing area generally employ Negroes in the lowest paying and least desirable jobs. Even in those industries (paper, apparel, and textiles) where they were formerly excluded, most of the Negroes who are hired usually are employed as laborers and menials.

The issues explored at the Montgomery hearing are of importance not only to the citizens of Alabama or the South but to the entire Nation. For the past three years the Commission's program has focused primarily on racial problems in the urban centers of the Nation. But in a Nation whose people have always been on the move, the problems of the cities and the rural communities are inseparable. A high proportion of the people crowded into urban slums today are migrants from the South. If young people do not receive adequate education or training in rural areas, their problems will soon become the problems of the cities. If Government policies fail to provide incentives for the development of jobs and economic growth in rural areas where technology is displacing people from the farms, the consequences will be felt by the Nation.

This account of the Commission's hearing in Montgomery was written by Paul Good, author and former journalist, who has covered civil rights news in the South for many years. The views of Mr. Good are not necessarily those of the Commission. This report is published in the hope that it will stimulate discussion and increase understanding of the problems under consideration among responsible community leaders and government officials.



1 Alabama revisited

Ten years ago, a U.S. Commission an Civil Rights hearing in Montgomery, Alabama documents the fact that civic equality for blacks in the South is a fiction. White supremacy is seen subverting American democracy as witness after witness describes the web of racism in which Negroes struggle to survive. Registering to vote is an act of heroism (some would say foolhardiness) and to aspire is a crime. Punishment varies from slow economic strangulation to death. The Nation at large learns what it has always known, that arrogant assumptions of racial superiority and narrow materialism blind us to injustice against men poor and black. The knowledge is buried deep in the national soul, denied or disregarded, but continuously eating away at our spiritual vitals, hollowing our democratic rhetoric.

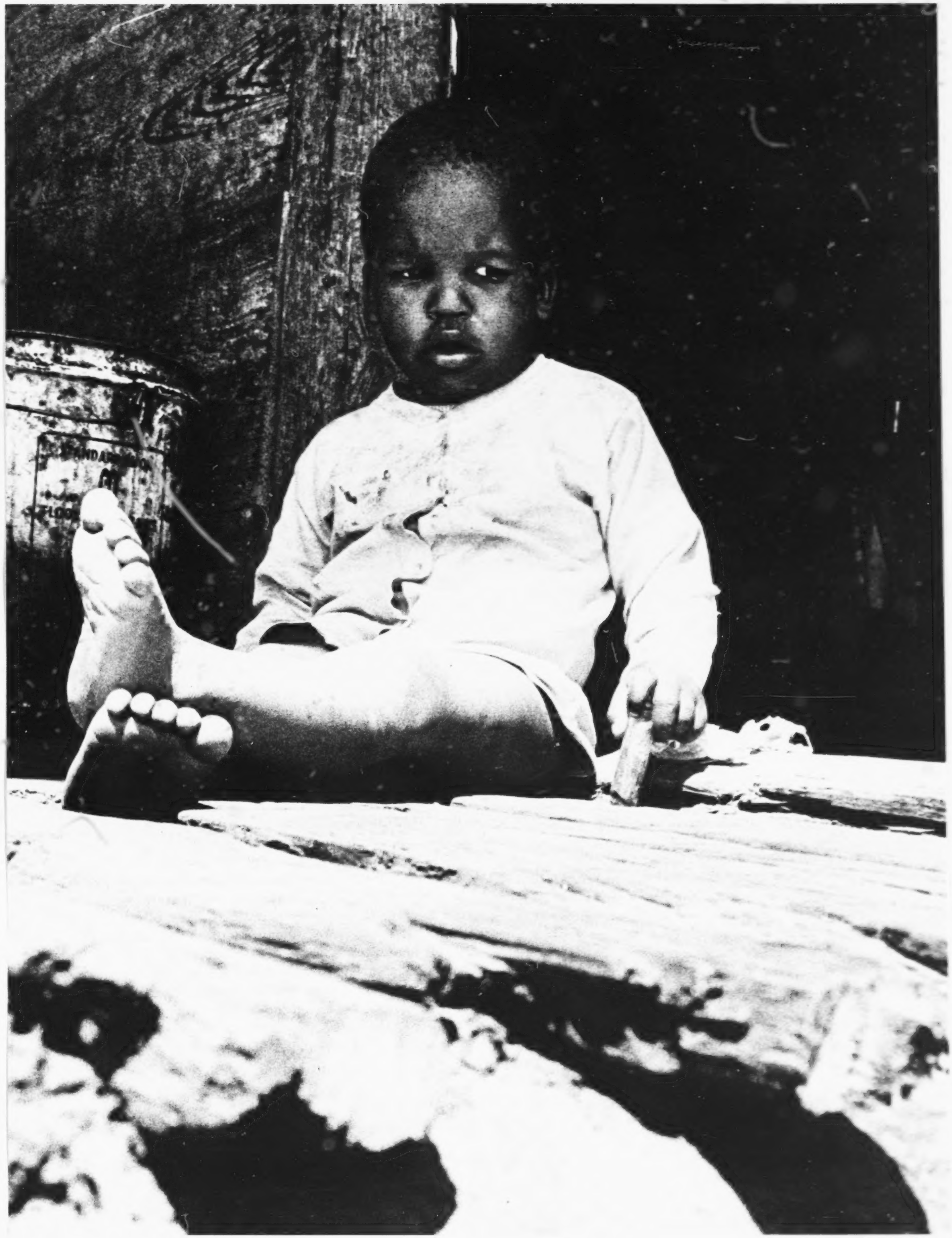
Black men, women, and children determine to force that knowledge up into the national consciousness and a decade begins when disenfranchised Negroes march by the thousands down a hundred highways seeking justice at the end of the road. They are reviled, jailed, beaten, and sometimes killed. But slowly, painfully, they foster the creation of a body of civil rights legislation in Washington. In a Republic proud that it is a Nation of laws, and not of men's vagaries, the law is written clear and penalties for breaking it set. All citizens must be allowed to travel, find lodging, vote, labor, be educated, and share in the fruits of Federal programs without discrimination. It is the law of the land like any other.

So the decade passes and black children who were at play in 1958 grow into adulthood that puts away childish things, mothers give birth to a new generation, and fathers seek to provide for it. In April, 1968, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights returns to Montgomery to hold another hearing. But as witnesses black and white testify, time seems out of joint. A black man who was an Army sergeant returns home to Alabama and when he looks for work finds himself demoted to "boy." Black farmers tell of segregated treatment from Federal agencies and some describe being forced off land they have worked for generations because they try to join in the political process. A white mayor who keeps a photo file of civil rights demonstrators screens job applicants for a plant with Federal contracts and "paper compliance" with Washington job equality directives mocks the law's intent. Black children describe inferior educational opportunities, a black father declares he must drive his family 40 miles to buy a malted milk or humble himself to use a Colored Only entrance. . . . The testimony belongs in the 1958 transcript yet it is down in black-and-white, dated 1968.

The hearing does bring into focus one all-encompassing aspect of Negro life in Alabama not clearly apparent before in the web of racism, a strand circling around and around to shape a contemporary cycle of poverty. The cycle extends from cradle to grave, often a journey of only a few hours for black infants in a State where Negro infant mortality is two and sometimes three times that of white. For those who survive, the cycle continues through a youth of shack living, of under-nourishment and segregated under-education with their inevitable by-products of poor health and scant learning, and then years of adulthood eked out on welfare for mothers while for men there are careers pushing brooms, pumping gas, scraping meager yields from another man's land. The ways that discrimination works are varied but all are variations on a single theme: Keep the Negro in his place or force him to flee.

As the 1968 hearing charts each segment of the poverty cycle, a curious fact emerges. Federal law exists to break the cycle at nearly every point, yet the cycle remains unbroken. It is a shopworn axiom of those who prefer the racial *status quo* that understanding cannot be legislated. Neither can love for the income tax. The income tax laws, however unloved, are stringently enforced. Where there is partial enforcement of civil rights laws in areas like voting, dramatic results are sometimes produced. But implementation is more often indifferent than stringent, particularly when those laws impinge on the course of corporations or challenge the vague monoliths called power structures, and the results of this indifference speak for themselves in the Montgomery hearings.

If the Nation will bother to listen.



2 Robbing the cradle

You hear a squalling cry from a shack that at first glance seems abandoned with boarded-up windows and splintered walls. But a black life has just begun inside. A midwife delivers the baby in this rough shack that does not have running water and is fly-infested in the summer, cold and damp in the Alabama winter. The State has no program enabling poor mothers to give birth in hospitals, and the county public health clinics provide only spotty pre-natal care. So in rural areas a majority of the children of the poor emerge into a midwife's hands. If she is skilled, if the climate is kind, then all may go well for the time being. There will, of course, be no layette, no bottle sterilizer, no baby talcum, lotions, or other maternal accoutrements that magazine and television advertisements tell us are the American Way of Motherhood. But if the infant's grip on life is tenacious, there will be a chance at childhood.

Childhood in the Alabama Black Belt and particularly in the 16 counties surveyed by the Commission is circumscribed by physical facts that in 1968 are remindful of frontier days. Wild animals do not stalk but hunger and privation do. Ninety-five percent of Negro shacks—commonly white-owned—are officially classified as dilapidated, deteriorating, or lacking plumbing and inside toilets. The outdoor privies that postcard makers find so humorous are located dangerously close to the family well. The shacks are constructed of bare planks and while they once may have been tight when new, they are now thirty or forty years old, too old to resist wind and rain. Mrs. Pattie Mae Haynes, mother of six from Shorter, Alabama, has two beds that she and her children share. As Commission General Counsel Howard Glickstein questions her about a photo of her shack, Mrs. Haynes reveals an obsession with rain that a listener finds almost hypnotic.

Mrs. Haynes: That is the room it rains in there.
Mr. Glickstein: That is the room in which it rains?
Mrs. Haynes: Yes sir, it rains in that room.
Mr. Glickstein: It looks like a bed. Is that a bed I see?
Mrs. Haynes: No—yes, that is a bed, and those are clothes up on the bed. It rains in there.
Mr. Glickstein: How many rooms—
Mrs. Haynes: We don't stay in there when it rains.
Mr. Glickstein: How many rooms do you have?
Mrs. Haynes: I have two rooms and a kitchen but we stay in one room when it rains.

Mrs. Pattie Mae Haynes tells of leaky roofs, hungry stomachs

Rain or shine, how well do children sleep three and four in a bed? How do they study in a shack where the beds are the only furniture, a single naked bulb the only light, no desks and chairs, no lamps for young eyes to read by? Sometimes there is no need to study because they do not get to school. Mrs. Rebecca Ward, of Akron, Alabama, supports 10 children and a grandchild on $26 a month welfare plus $12 a week she earns working every day except Sunday from seven until noon in a white family's house.

"I have got four children staying out all this year," Mrs. Ward says, "Because they didn't have shoes and clothes to wear, and I wasn't able to [buy them] because I wasn't making but $12 a week and I had to try to clothe and feed them . . [last night] I fed them biscuits and syrup."

Mrs. Ward uses food stamps to feed her children. This is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program enabling the poor to buy coupons each month worth more than their purchase price when redeemed at food stores. Stamp prices vary with income and family size and USDA—under pressure from groups reporting widespread hunger and malnutrition among the poor—has authorized some very low price scales. For example, a family with no income can pay 50¢ a month per person for $12 worth of food. However, USDA has not scaled down food stamp charges accordingly for those in higher income categories. Mrs. Ward pays $46 a month for stamps worth $120 at the store. The price is too high for her income (approximately $75 a month) and the quantity of food the stamps purchase too low to sustain 12 persons for a month. It is the uni-

There are 18 children in this shack living on a total of $127 a month welfare

versal experience of purchasers that stamps run out during the third week. Then the long stretch begins to the first of the month with biscuits and syrup, pan bread and gravy the staple on supper tables in shacks where children do not have to be coaxed to eat what is put before them.

In the majority of Alabama counties, the poor receive free Federal commodities [surplus foods] that USDA says are supposed to *supplement* their diets. The commodities are nutritionally deficient in protein, overweighted with starch, and do not include fresh meat, fresh milk, fruits, or vegetables. For the very poor, "supplement" is merely a word in bureaucracy's lexicon. Commodities represent their major food supply. But supplemental or elemental, they do not last the month either. A county cannot have both commodity and stamp programs, and the trend is to replace commodities with stamps, a trend encouraged by merchants interested in selling food. Many of the more "affluent" poor themselves prefer the stamps that enable purchasers to choose a more varied menu. But experience shows that when a county switches to stamps, the number of persons in the program drops from one-third to one-half. How the dropouts who were getting commodities then eat, what they eat, or if they eat are questions that officialdom has not sought to answer.

"There are many children in this State, both black and white, who go to bed hungry at night," concedes Alabama Welfare Director Ruben King.*

This is how the cycle begins, with black minds and bodies starved and stunted in the beginning years when they should be growing strong. Even the Alabama farmland around them receives better treatment, is cultivated and fed with nutrients. But the children are expendable, a human crop that must thrive or fail as best it can. And the yield is predictable. Dr. Alan C. Mermann, Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at Yale Medical School, tells the hearing of a 1966 study he made of young and old—including 709 children—in Lowndes County for the Tuskegee Institute Community Education Project. His subjects all were black in a county where black outnumbers white four to one, but where white has long held black in economic and political thrall.

"Eighty percent of these children . . had anemia sufficient to require treatment in any doctor's office anywhere in the country. [But] 90 percent of the children said they had never seen a doctor. One of those who answered Yes to the question said: 'Yes, he pulled my tooth.'

". . . 25 percent of the children, one in four, needed further referral for glasses. One child out of the 709 I examined had glasses."

*They have been going even hungrier in the past because of the arbitrary refusal of Alabama counties to admit Federal food programs. In October, 1966, only 32 of the State's 67 counties participated in the programs and these reached only 132,000 persons while an estimated 1,217,000 Alabamians were in poverty. Of those fortunate 32 counties, only three were in the heavily-Negro Black Belt. Under increasing Federal pressure including the USCCR investigation begun last year and hard-hitting reports from civil rights groups, participation has increased until today all counties have programs or are in the process of getting them. Still, only one in five poverty-stricken Alabama citizens presently receives Federal food.

The bromide, like father, like son, assumes ominous overtones in Lowndes County. Dr. Mermann is asked about the effects of anemia on "the economic life of the Negro" and his reply shows child and parent linked in generational deprivation.

"The ones that I examined and whom we tested, 80 percent of them have approximately two-thirds of the amount of red blood that the Commissioners have. This gives you some idea of the extent of fatigue. . . . I have never seen children sleeping in school before—this was a summer program—and these children would be asleep on the floor at ten o'clock in the morning. It explains, I think, some of the fatigue of the mother of six or eight children, some of the fatigue she has when she is operating on a very low margin of oxygen-carrying capacity in her blood. It explains the difficulty that a man might have in providing for his family. His inability to work on. I think this has a profound economic impact on the community involved."

Dr. Mermann also thinks that black life expectancy is cut eight to ten years that of white by poverty's diet beginning in the cradle. If one individual inflicts death on another, it is called murder. The question arises: What do we call it when the richest society in the world permits some of its citizens to die untimely deaths for lack of food, allows some of its babies never to live at all? Before his testimony ends, Dr. Mermann has one more observation not to be gleaned from any statistical table.

". . . if children are not being fed properly from their earliest days, if the parent cannot feed his child or her child as parents feel a child should be fed, this produces a certain apathy and perhaps a mistrust or a—maybe a real distrust of the adult world when those earliest crying infant needs are not being met properly. This, I think, has a profound influence on the way one sees the world from then on. . . ."

Sick young lives could be salvaged in Alabama and the burden of medical expenses eased for impoverished adults through Medicaid. State experts testify that Alabama could have a Medicaid program for about $35 million with the Federal Government paying 83 percent of the cost. Life-prolonging operations could be performed and needed medical treatment not deferred until it is too late. But like many other States, North and South, the Alabama Government feels little commitment to those poor and black. It spends hundreds of millions building superhighways with about the same percentage of Federal aid that it refuses to accept for Medicaid. Montgomery State Health Officer Dr. Ira Myers is troubled, He says:

". . .unfortunately there isn't the same emphasis on health as there is on highways. . . . We have offered it several times—the amount of money that it would take to build one mile of road and the amount that we could do in the Health Services, but there seems to be more interest in highways than in health."

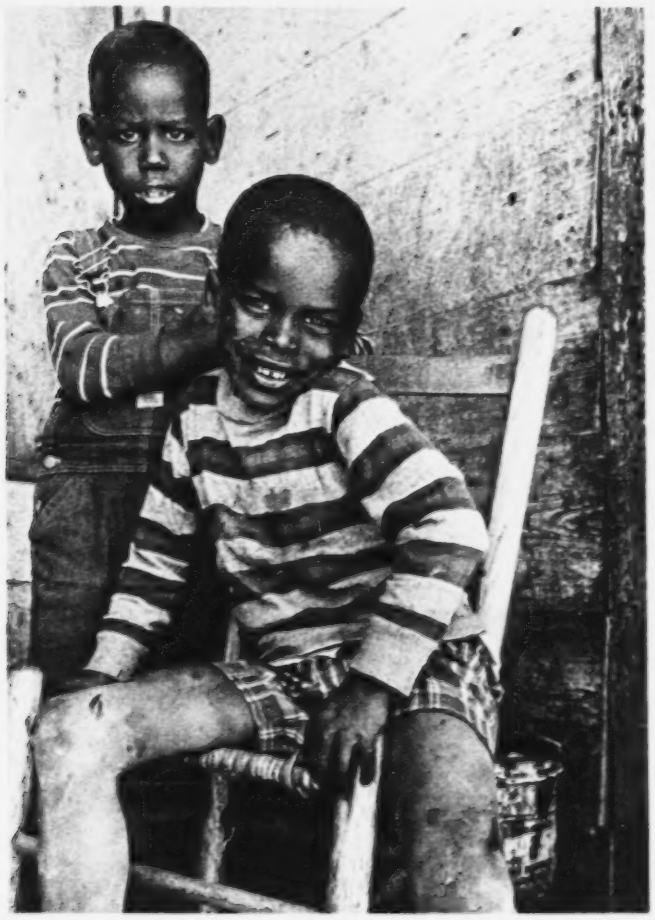
Alabama Negro leaders believe that Medicaid has been resisted by white powers because it would aid black poor on a nondiscriminatory

basis, perhaps encouraging them to stay where they were born instead of emigrating to a Northern ghetto. A sense of Congressional priority might suggest halting funds to lay down highways past shackfuls of sick children until Alabama shows 20th century concern for all her children. The Congress may rationalize its inaction with political evasions. But what of a Federal department that exists only to help the poor yet is so under-financed that it can only go through the motions? Dr. Robert Griffin is a member of the Lowndes County Board of Health and chairman of a board of directors that has applied for an Office of Economic Opportunity health care program. His description of life and death in Lowndes is not so stark as Dr. Mermann's but it is bad enough. He says that more than half the county's 15,000 population is sufficiently poverty stricken to qualify for an OEO health program. Lowndes is not a convenient place for anyone, rich or poor, to be sick. It has only two doctors located 35 miles apart, no ambulance service, and no hospitals. Dr. Griffin lists services that *could* be made available in a county where only 70 of 700 black children have ever *seen* a doctor.

". . .medical and dental treatment, drugs, preventative health services . . . hospitalization . . . institutional care . . . eye glasses . . . community health education.

"Last October we submitted to the OEO a request for $3 million to carry out a program that would include all of these functions. That request is now undergoing budgetary analysis—and I will say very drastic cutting too, because OEO has indicated that $1 million plus *may* be granted to us for carrying out these services."

One-third of what is needed leaves two-thirds of the people needing it right where they have always been—on their cycle to nowhere.



Experts testify their life expectancy is 8 to 10 years less than white youngsters

3 Crime in the classroom

Levie Pettway attends Boykin High School in Boykin, Alabama, and like many black youth, he is considering the Army for a career. Pettway is a gentle boy without any marked inclination for the rigors of Army life so his choice does not depend so much on an urge to travel the military high road as it does on the civilian dead end facing him.

"I *was* thinking about heavy machinery, heavy equipment," he says.

The nearly all-white Camden High School has a variety of vocational courses. But Boykin High offers only typing and vocational agriculture.

"I took vocational agriculture three years," Pettway says.

"Are there many students that take that course?" a questioner asks.

"Yes, sir."

"Do they plan to become farmers?"

"Most of them don't."

The Alabama Education Department continues to concentrate on farming at Boykin despite the fact that Alabama's black rural farm population that reached almost half a million in 1930 has plummeted 70 percent to 125,000 today. And Auburn University predicts that if the trend toward technological potential is realized ". . .the total number of farms in Alabama today will have to be reduced to less than half." Clearly, Levie Pettway and his friends —for some reason—are being trained for a futureless vocation, and the dangers of an Army career look good in comparison to being a black high school graduate job hunting in Alabama.

Sadie Allen, of Greenville, graduated with honors this May from Southside High School in Greenville. She is pretty and bright, and a measure of her brightness can be gauged from the early education she overcame in order to make a high school honor roll. Her first six years of learning were spent in a black country school with two grades in each classroom—first and second in one, third and fourth in another, then fifth and sixth. Her Southside High School wasn't much better than Levie Pettway's until civil rights demonstrations began and protest brought a trade building with courses in brick masonry, auto mechanics, and cosmetology. A price was extracted, however, from activists like Miss Allen who concedes she is considered a "biggety nigger" by many in Greenville, black and white.

"They treated the kids that demonstrated much different than they did the ones that didn't demonstrate," she tells the hearing. "I am an honor student and we got suspended from school for demonstrating, and when I went back to school, all the teachers—I got an F the first six weeks in every class I went into. The teachers, they treat you different as if you are bad or something when, really, you are trying to help all of the people, you are not just trying to get out there for the kicks of it, you are trying to help everybody.

Fourteen years after the Supreme Court decision, only 1.7 percent of black students in Alabama attend formerly all-white schools

Eighty percent of substandard schools in the hearing area are black

"My mother believes in waiting on the Lord. And I believe in waiting on the Lord, true enough. But I also feel that you have to help yourself. Because I mean the Lord isn't going to come down here and tell this white man who is beating your head to stop. I think He gave you enough sense to stop him from beating your head by hitting him back."

Children forcing a school to teach them more at once says something positive, even exciting, about the children and something negative, even morbid, about their society. Blessed with above-average intelligence, possessed of a will, Miss Allen inspires confidence that somehow she will make it in that society. It probably won't be in Greenville even though nationally famous companies like Dan River Mills are located there and offer good jobs to some people.

"Most Negroes know they aren't going to be hired for anything but sweeping the floor," she says in a reference to Dan River's total black work force of a watchman, a warehouseman, and a truck driver doubling as a janitor. "So they just don't go out there."

Although her future is uncertain, she is keenly aware that the futures of many classmates are fixed. They are the ones caught in the cycle, who barely settle in class when the fall term starts and then drop out six weeks for the harvest fields outside the city.

"Most of the kids," Sadie Allen says, "they stay on the white man's land so when cotton picking time gets in or time to chop cotton they have to stay out or else they will have to find someplace else to live."

Black education in Alabama is a blend of anomaly, hypocrisy, and lawlessness. Before 1954, it was said to be separate but equal although it was unequal. Since 1954, it is supposed to be integrated by Federal law although it is segregated. *Why* segregated, unequal education is allowed to persist in defiance of the law is an American phenomenon in a Nation that de-

A day care center near Selma organized by local people

plores crime in the streets but is strangely tolerant of crime in the classroom that robs children of an education. *That* segregated, unequal education persists is evident from Commission statistics on school systems in the 16 surveyed counties where 56,417 black children represent 65 percent of total enrollment. The Commission finds:

"Despite Federal school requirements promulgated by the Health, Education, and Welfare Department, and legal suits and court orders in everyone of the systems, only 984 or 1.7 percent of the black students are attending formerly all-white schools as of September, 1967."

Statistics are only palatable in small doses but a small dose of statistics may reveal large truths about national tolerance of criminally inadequate treatment of black children. Eighty percent of all sub-standard schools in the area are black. White schools proportionally have four times the space of black ones. In Clarke County, only one white school has an insurance valuation less than $110,000 and that is valued at $52,000. No Negro school is valued at more than $20,000 and two are valued at $750. White school libraries average 13.8 books per child; black schools have 5.9. All white schools are accredited by the State of Alabama; one third of the black ones are not. One final statistical finding therefore comes as no surprise: Negro students test far below the white level—itself below the national level—in virtually all scholastic areas.

Behind each digit of each percentile there is a child. His mind can expand, grow strong and proud, and sustain him, or it can languish, dooming him to a serf's role in a society so advanced that it reaches for the cosmos. Concern for this human essence is hard to find among Alabama education officials. State Education Superintendent Ernest Stone is asked why Clarke County has white schools worth $110,000 and black schools worth $750. He replies blandly:

"Well, I would assume that the building which is assessed for $110,000 is a more expensive building than the one that is assessed for $750. That would be a reasonable assumption. Now, it is up to—the State has nothing to do with the building of either one of the buildings. All the plans were promulgated by the local school system. It is a little something that we call democracy and we think that it has worked pretty well."

A considerable portion of Alabama's smooth-working educational democracy depends on Federal Government contributions. Sadie Allen's hometown of Greenville is located in Butler County. Butler County School Superintendent Gene Stroud confesses that without Federal and State money augmenting skimpy local tax resources, his schools could operate only 13 days a year.

"But," he adds, "We would have to dismiss at nine o'clock on the thirteenth day."

Federal money is bolstering a Butler County school system that has desegregated less than 1 percent since the 1954 Supreme Court decision. That slim trickle of black into white schools resulted from so-called "freedom of choice" plans which technically open white schools to Negroes. *If* they care to risk attendance. Ingenious Southern minds—and not a few Northern ones—have been occupied for more than a decade devising ways to circumvent civil rights law. "Freedom of choice" with its democratic ring has been a semantic and practical

State Education Superintendent Ernest Stone says that the Alabama school system represents "a little something that we call democracy."

success in perpetuating segregation. Black parents living on white land, working for white employers, in debt to white banks and store-owners are "free" to risk white disapproval by sending their children to white schools. The black children are "free" to travel to a school where they will be treated like dark pariahs, teenagers trying to concentrate on an education while under psychological pressures that grown men handle only with difficulty.

School districts could be re-zoned and schools consolidated to save tax money and make integration easier in the process. But in Alabama —and other Alabamas North and South—the intention is to make it as difficult as possible. The argument is that integration must proceed slowly, considerate of the feelings of people who cannot change overnight. Aside from the fact that 14 years have elapsed since "proceeding slowly" began, this argument makes the tacit assumption that white feelings deserve pre-eminent consideration. The feelings of blacks who for generations have been robbed of educations, and will continue to be robbed in generations to come by slow procedures, these feelings are somehow expendable. A Supreme Court which has exhibited judicial patience in waiting for its 1954 decision to take effect recently warned that "freedom of choice" no longer would be an acceptable device for thwarting both letter and spirit of that decision. But as the hearing proceeds, the apprehension grows that Alabama has an inexhaustible supply of devices in its store of anti-integration materiel.

School busing, for example. In the North the words are anathema to those who would block integration since busing there is sometimes used to achieve racial balance. The Alabama accent is different. Investigation reveals that buses often play a key role in maintaining segregation in a trade school system whose $4 million budget includes $800,000 from the Federal Government.

In Selma, scene of both triumph and tragedy during the Movement, the Rufus King School is all-white. In Montgomery, Trenholm School is all-black. Each school day, black students from Selma board buses and ride for an hour to the Trenholm School. Why don't they attend Rufus King School and save themselves two hours travel time since in this case both schools offer basically the same courses? State Director of Vocational Education J. F. Ingram has an answer.

"Well," he says, "We operate on the freedom of choice plan, they can go to either school."

A catalogue for Trenholm School is produced. It is given to students contemplating a trade school. To certain students. The catalogue is illustrated with photographs and Civil Rights Commission General Counsel Glickstein observes:

"I have looked through this book and there are a lot of pictures in it and I don't see a picture of a white person in the book, just pictures of Negroes."

Mr. Ingram: That's right.

Mr. Glickstein: Do you think that a white student looking at this catalogue might get the message?

Mr. Ingram: Not necessarily. They are free to go to any school they want.

They are also free to go to any school they want in Eufaula, Alabama. But no white boy or girl chooses to go to the all-black McCoo High School. Prejudice is the basic reason there are no white faces at McCoo. But there is another compelling reason not to go there. McCoo is an educational stacked deck, a raw deal designed to make losers of those on the receiving end. Through fogs of half-truth, evasion, and the cant of apologists for segregation, McCoo emerges in irrefutable detail as an example of how black students are handicapped long before they begin to compete for a livelihood, for a place in life.

There are three witnesses—O. B. Carter, Eufaula City Schools Superintendent; Arthur Jones, Coordinator of Vocational Industrial Education; and Theodore R. Gibbs, a Negro instructor in carpentry at McCoo. Mr. Carter has been superintendent for a quarter of a century. He is under Federal court order to provide integrated education which, he says, is followed "to the letter." The once all-white Eufaula High School has been accredited by both the State and the Southern Association of Secondary Schools for 25 years. In the last two

years, 47 black students have entered the student body of 700 and there are two black teachers—one a librarian, the other a gym instructor. There are three white teachers but no white students at McCoo which received State accreditation seven years ago and was accredited by the Southern Association only three years ago. Mr. Carter concedes that all those years McCoo lacked accreditation meant that Negro students were disadvantaged. But he has a disclaimer of sorts that subtly shifts blame to the *victims* of the system, and it conveniently is attributed to a Negro. High black absenteeism at McCoo is being discussed and Mr. Carter says:

"The principal of the McCoo High School made a statement the other day. She thought it was lack of interest on the part of Negro parents, seeing that they go to school. And she said so many times that the father or mother had deserted a family and left them with relatives and then, of course, I think the lack of probably money to buy some of the things that they would like to have. They would rather get out and work than go to school."

This leads Civil Rights Commission Staff Director William L. Taylor into a colloquy with Mr. Carter.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Carter, you spoke about the fact that mothers might lack interest in their children's education. Do you suppose some of those mothers were educated at the schools you were in charge of for 25 years?

Mr. Carter: Some of them probably were.

Mr. Taylor: Do you think that might account for the lack of interest in education?

Mr. Carter: Not because I was superintendent.

Mr. Taylor: Because of the quality of the education?

Mr. Carter: Might have been. Probably so.

The past is beyond reclamation. But what of a present that continues the abuses of the past? Mr. Jones explains that the white high school has a vocational industrial education program. Behind the grey title is a bright concept. Students receive courses in office skills, merchandising, and banking, and are placed with local employers during school years for on-the-job training so that when they graduate businessmen already familiar with them are waiting with jobs. Mr. Carter says that McCoo has a "corresponding" training program and Mr. Gibbs is called on to describe just how it "corresponds."

"The trade I teach is carpentry and cabinet work," he says. "And at the end of the year I turn in a list of students that are capable of doing this job over to the State Employment Service and when the jobs become available they are being distributed in those jobs."

White youngsters are welcomed into banks and offices, black youngsters go on a State carpenter's list. An observer has a sense of *deja vu,* past and present mix, all this has happened before in the black cycle. Yet Mr. Carter defends his system in light of the Supreme Court decision and points out that black students at McCoo get a course that whites at Eufaula don't have—Spanish.

"We are complying now," he says.

It is a little too much for Mr. Taylor.

"In my judgment, sir," he says, "You are not only not complying with the Supreme Court's decision—you are not complying with the decision of Plessy versus Ferguson."*

*The 1896 Supreme Court decision giving judicial sanction to the segregationists' "separate but equal" credo which became the basis for separate-but-unequal racial treatment in schools, trains, bathrooms, and cemeteries.

322-362 O - 68 - 3

4 Crime in the fields

Most Alabama blacks learn to be poor on the land. The rural landscape in the Black Belt today is barren of hope for Negroes as it always has been. Apologists for white supremacy and Government officials derelict in their duty to assist impartially all farmers have a conscience-easing rationale for today's desperate conditions. They blame them on farm mechanization and other technological improvements that have combined with a shift away from cotton to cripple small cotton farmers in general and black ones in particular. Physically and psychologically, the Black Belt landscape *has* changed in recent decades. That mythic tableaux of happy blacks that white minds saw (or pretended to see) there is forever disarranged by reality at last revealed: those beloved pickaninnies trailing cotton sacks down long white rows were slavelings, the smiling Aunt Jemimas straight off the pancake box in their bandanas bore maternal grief and black anger in their burden of white folks' wash, and the black men shuffled because they dared not stride. The Movement that replaced myth with reality coincided with a changing environment, and undeniably mechanization is a large factor in forcing blacks out of the farm economy and worsening their poverty. But blacks were poor before the first mechanical cotton picker lumbered onto an Alabama field in the early 40's and the only thing different about the old shacks they lived in then is that today they are 25 years older.

The Agriculture Department reports that 98 percent of Negro farms in the area are inadequate. It does not report that segregated and inferior service from Alabama agencies of the Department has played an historic role in this inadequacy, a role that is little improved in 1968. The 1965 Civil Rights Commission Report on *Equal Opportunity in Farm Programs* concluded:

"The Commission's analysis of four major USDA programs has clearly indicated that the Department has generally failed to assume responsibility for assuring equal opportunity and equal treatment to all those entitled to benefit from its programs. Instead, the prevailing practice has been to follow local patterns of racial segregation and discrimination in providing assistance paid for by Federal funds. . . As the group most depressed economically, most deprived educationally and most oppressed socially, Negroes have been consistently denied access to many services, provided with inferior services when served, and segregated in federally financed agriculture programs whose very task was to raise their standard of living."

Some improvements were ordered from Washington, a few orders were implemented but staff investigators for the hearing find:

"In 1968, three years after the Commission's report and four years after this Nation committed itself to nondiscrimination in federally assisted programs, there has been no significant change in agricultural programs in Alabama."

This means that a lot of law is being broken in Alabama with the Federal Government accessory before and after the fact. Many Negroes feel that behind the lawlessness is a systematic effort by white Alabamians to force politically renascent Negroes out of the State by making life on the land untenable. Whether or not this is the intent, the effect of their behavior is apparent. Black population in the 16-county area has dropped by 25 percent in the last 25 years. Thousands have been evicted from tenant farms to drift like flotsam, washing up in Northern ghettos or in Alabama urban centers where the menial jobs are colored black. Rev. William Branch, a civil rights leader and the first black Congressional aspirant from Greene County since Reconstruction, saw nearly 100 families turned out overnight, stunned and penniless in a State that would not help them to shelter infants in arms while the Federal Government looked the other way.

"Now many of these people had no jobs," he says. "They were kicked out. Many of them lived on these places all of their lives, and they just couldn't realize, they just couldn't at first get adjusted to it that their good old boss would tell them to get out. Therefore it left them all shook up. And then those of us who are already fairly well set, we had to go to their rescue. And because of the food stamp program they have been able to eat something. But yet I don't feel that Federal programs have done much for these displaced persons.

"For example, many of them went to the Farmers Home Administration there in the county to try to secure some help in building houses. But, due to the small acreage or small lots [they had], and due to having no income whatsoever, they were not approved."

Farmer William Hill, evicted for voting

Rev. Branch is asked whether appeals have been sent to Washington and he replies:

"Washington knows . . . they have sent in some investigators and they have made their reports. You know, the thing is so tied up there that when they sent in the Federal representative, they have such a beautiful picture turned toward them that they sometimes go back to Washington thinking that everything is all right. At the time they leave, then hell starts being raised again."

Thirty-seven-year-old William Hill is a father of seven who had lived all his life on rented white cotton land that his father and grandfather before him had farmed. The Hill family and 23 others were summarily evicted in 1966. The prevailing white explanation was that it had become more profitable to put cotton land in soy beans or timber—planting trees instead of people, as one witness will describe it. There was some economic validity in this explanation, however inhumane the results. But there were other unspoken reasons.

"Mostly I think it was the voting," says Hill, who went to work in a factory making ammunition boxes after being forced to abandon his ploughshare. "I was active in voting. I transported people back and forth to the polls. They had no other way to go there and asked me to carry them in my car. . . . Most of the people evicted at the time I was was from 30 some years old up to 85 years, the head of a family."

Others who had lived with the knowledge they could not prosper in Alabama chose to emigrate when it became increasingly doubtful that they could even survive. A hard core remains, men like 66-year-old Hosea Guice who still plows with two mules in Macon County and has no desire to uproot and go North.

At 66, Hosea Guice still plows with mules

"I am happy on the land," he says, "On my country home. I love it, maybe because I don't know any better but I am happy on my country home."

His country is 80 percent black. Negroes are grossly under-represented on all farm committees and Federal farm agencies, whether the composition is elective or appointive. For example, only one of three FHA county committeemen is black. No Negro serves on the three-man county agriculture committee (based on elections by county farmers under Agriculture Department regulations) which is empowered to tell farmers how much cotton they may plant and which decides how much Federal payment they should receive when they voluntarily cut their planting to reduce the Nation's cotton surplus. Guice spoke out for civil rights and his own personal rights decades ago when most black Alabamians only whispered of such things. He praises Federal programs as "very helpful" and suggests that black farmers who fail are somehow remiss. At the same time, he has had to fight to get correct payments from the county committee administering Agriculture Department money.

"You see, there's only so much Federal money allotted to Macon County," he explains. "If they cut down the Negroes, they can raise the whites."

Discriminatory practices by the Department of Agriculture have helped keep black farmers behind the times

Few black farmers join Guice in his kindly estimate of USDA. Their experience is that second-class treatment from the white society around them is continued in the Agriculture offices, and when the Federal Government fails them, they have nowhere to turn. The Nation at large has been unaware of this private and governmental pressure that Negro farmers simply call "the squeeze." It is a complicated story and urban America's interest in farms understandably begins and ends with supermarket prices. But the poverty cycle dispossessing Southern black men fills Northern and Western slums with the smouldering cynicism of despair, with long memories of white oppression on one-mule farms and the genesis of a Chicago riot may be traced to a Black Belt cotton field. However complicated the story, it should be comprehended for two reasons. First, from a simple sense of justice. The food that has been coming to our tables, the clothes going on our backs have often come from the labor of men whose tables and backs are bare. But more important, forces that would keep those men degraded have mastered the mechanics of the story and bend them to their mean ends. To challenge them and reform the system requires an understanding of how it presently misfunctions.

Agriculture is big business in Alabama. Gross farm income in 1967 was $700 million with Government agricultural agencies spending nearly $200 million in the State. Ninety million came from direct USDA payments in the form of price subsidies and soil diversion checks, that is, money paid to farmers *not* to plant surplus crops like cotton and corn or to plant only controlled acreage of such crops. Large farmers get an unproportionate lion's share of these payments, while small, poor farmers get the leavings. Cotton no longer is king in the Black Belt but it remains a somewhat discredited prince. Poultry, livestock, and cotton are the big money-makers, in that order, reversing the order of the 30's. The Department of Agriculture increasingly transfers cotton allotments from the Black Belt to southwestern States where assembly-line, corporation farms produce more dependable yields that simplify domestic and international marketing of a better-grade cotton.

She farms to stretch a slim welfare check

What all this means is that cotton farming in the Black Belt is slowly but inevitably succumbing to complex market pressures with Federal planning speeding up the process.

As this development became apparent over the years, white Alabama farmers were receiving Federal financing and technical training that enabled them to break free of the one-crop cotton economy and diversify into poultry, livestock, and specialty crops. But as the decades of change in the 30's, 40's, and 50's passed, Negroes were left behind. Today, 80 percent of Alabama black farmers are still yoked to cotton on small, economically unfeasible farms while only 32 percent of whites remain cotton farmers, under universally better conditions. Only 4 percent of Negroes are in livestock, less than 1 percent in poultry.

Why?

Farmers obviously need sun, rain, seed, and soil to bring in a harvest. There are two other vital, man-made ingredients—credit and know-how. Historically, white landowners renting to Negroes—or to poor, yeoman-class whites—or banks lending to black farm owners insisted on the security of a cotton crop because of its high cash yield and because it is easily stored and readily marketed. Dependence on one crop fostered agrarian ignorance and impoverishment when the crop failed. The inception of Federal programs promised to end this dependence and for many white farmers the promise has been fulfilled through three major USDA programs:

- The Farmers Home Administration (FHA) lends low-interest money for current operations (seed and fertilizer purchase), for farm expansion, and home building and improvements (inside toilets), and for specific help to the poorest farmers (economic opportunity loans that can be made to destitute groups like those Greene County evictees).
- The Cooperative Extension Service counsels farmers in new techniques, assists farm wives in everything from rosebush horticulture to nutritional food preparation, and broadens the horizons of farm youth through 4-H Clubs.
- The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) supervises crop allotments—how much land a farmer will be permitted to put into production of crops like cotton and corn. The decisions of ASCS county committees can spell profit or poverty, and while the power they wield can sometimes be challenged successfully as demonstrated by Hosea Guice, it generally is impervious to black appeal.

The "why" of Negro failure to share in the new agricultural order involves the racial composition and behavior of these agencies in a State where unequal treatment of black by white has long been the norm:

- FHA has 202 employees in Alabama but only seven are Negroes. In the FHA State office, none of the clerical workers is black and only one of 24 professional workers is nonwhite. Three-man county committees appointed by the FHA State director pass on loan applications. Before 1964, no Negro had ever served on a committee. Black farms today reflect those years of all-white loan-making, essentially prejudicial and generally discriminatory against poor farmers whatever their race. A 1965 directive from Washington has resulted in the appointment of 30 Negroes out of 183 committeemen. It is a positive step although there is no committee with more than one black member despite a Negro farm majority in 12 counties. Every cent FHA loans or pays out in salaries is Federal.
- The U.S. Secretary of Agriculture in Washington appoints the five-member State ASCS Committee which supervises the county programs so crucial to the welfare of all farmers. One Negro finally has been named to this committee. Federal funds pay *all* ASCS employees in Alabama. The State office has 43 workers, two of them black. In 26 counties where Negroes constitute at least 20 percent of all farmers, all full-time professional ASCS employees are white and only seven of the 159 permanent employes are black with all seven in clerical positions.
- Forty percent of Extension Service money comes from the Federal Government. Extension field services in Alabama are grossly segregated. Ninety-one percent of white agents surveyed visited only white households while 96 percent of Negro agents visited only Negro families. Eighty percent of 4-H Club members attend segregated clubs, the pattern of the future moulded along segregated lines of the past.

In 12 counties where Negroes are in majority, no black man holds or has ever held a top Extension position. Alabama is not alone. In no Southern county do Negroes hold a single top Extension position although they are a farm majority in 58 of those counties. The number of white Extension agents in these counties is nearly double the number of black although the population is 73 percent Negro. Since agents—through segregationist custom and extra legal Extension practice—work almost exclusively within racial lines, this means that a numerically smaller group of black agents has a numerically greater workload than white. The result of this misapportionment in Alabama and elsewhere in the South is inferior service to Negro farmers and their consequent inability to keep up with changing agricultural times.

The solution, of course, is not merely to increase the number of black agents but to break down artificial color lines fencing in expertise that should be ranging freely over the Alabama countryside. But the Extension Service goes to ludicrous lengths to turn a segregated face on its clients. For example, a separate Negro office was maintained in Sumter County and located over a pool hall until Washington ordered integration. Now, everybody is in one building. But two white male agents share an office while the black agent works alone. Extension will go to any length to insure black privacy. The white female assistant county supervisor does not insist on a private office for herself. She shares an office with a white female agent, leaving the black female agent an office to *herself*. A black secretary is working in a room formerly used to store office equipment. The equipment shares another office with two white secretaries.

While hiring and administration is a Federal responsibility, the way that Extension performs has come to depend on local men and mores. The Alabama atmosphere not only encourages but ordains that racial discrimination persist. Former Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace saw this discrimination flourish under his administration. But while he decries the breakdown of law enforcement in America and denounces crimes like civil disobedience, he never moved against the illegal evasion of Title VI* in his home State. The cause-and-effect relation between lawless, discriminatory agriculture programs and the black poverty cycle with its attendant social disorders cannot be fixed scientifically. There are many subjective human factors involved. But it is public record that black Alabama farmers receive proportionally fewer and smaller FHA loans than whites. White Extension Service specialists in livestock, poultry, and vegetable crops have played a major role in helping white farmers get out from behind mules and away from cotton rows, while the bulk of Negro agents have operated within the narrow confines of cotton. The sons of black farmers are written off before they start. Greene County has 2,400 Negro males of school age or older compared to 400 white youth; there is one black agent to run the 4-H Club for black children, two for the whites. Political chicanery in ASCS elections, aimed at barring Negroes from gaining decision-making authority over allotments and payments, rivals the conniving of big-city ward bosses. White committees that never before nominated Negroes now flood ballots with Negro names to split the black vote while limiting white nominees and insuring their election. New USDA regulations designed to curtail election abuses have not produced significant results: *today there are more than 4,100 county committeemen in the South and not one is black.*

Given these handicaps, the greenest of black thumbs can harvest little from life. No one will ever know how good a farmer Mike Johnson might have been. Not even Johnson. He's about 50 now and scrapes along on a few acres of land. Johnson lived all his life in Dallas County, farmed on rented land, watched his five children go North as soon as they were grown to escape his fate. Not once in his farming life, he tells the hearing, did an Extension agent ever visit him and the one time he

* Title VI prohibits discrimination in *any* federally assisted program.

tried to buy land through FHA, he was turned down for a loan. Charles Griffin who lives near Johnson also has hoed a long row. For exactly 54 years and nine months he lived on the 11,000 acre plantation of Jesse Hardy Hain, raising 11 children. Griffin's father had lived there before him. But in 1966 civil rights activity spread its evangelistic message through Dallas County and one morning. . . .

". . . I went down there to his (Hain's) store and he just saw me and told me he wanted his house and wanted me to move away off his place."

No reason, he says, was ever given. Reasons for things on the Hain place—where 42 black and nine white tenants still rent land and shacks with no inside plumbing—were generally hard to come by. The plantation grosses more than a quarter of a million dollars a year in cotton, corn, timber, and livestock with diversion payments alone averaging thousands each year. Hain's cow barns are better than his rented shacks but the shack rentals add to the gross. He has testified that tenant diversion checks came to him when he had an assignment on them and he usually had an assignment from loans to tenants or advances of seed and fertilizer. Tenant indebtedness, never-ending from year to year, was an historic Southern pattern long before Federal diversion checks arrived to simplify and guarantee collections. Everybody on the Hain place *must* plant cotton and they *must* gin it at the Hain gin and accept the Hain accounting. Griffin tells how he signed over all his diversion checks and when he is asked if anybody ever told him how much he was entitled to, how much he was signing away, he replies:

"Sure didn't."

But his eviction was followed by a happy ending of sorts. Griffin and 12 other evicted farmers received FHA Economic Opportunity loans to buy collectively 302 acres, a remarkable occurrence in Alabama. Now in the late afternoon of his life he at last owns the ground under his plow. Has his outlook on life changed as a landowner?

"In every respect," he says. "Because when I was on the Hain place, I was blind, didn't know anything but work, make it and they didn't give it to me. But now if I make anything I know which way it went, I know what I made, and that is a lot better."

A pause and then he adds,

"Just 25 or 30 years too late. I hope it ain't though. I hope I have some more years to live and get some enjoyment out of this."

Farmers describe Agriculture Department indifference

5 The cooperatives and the non-cooperatives

By 1966, it was clear to many black Alabama farmers that they were being plowed under. Agrarian economics were working against them because a racist system rendered them small and therefore unprofitable. A cruel paradox saw the Civil Rights Movement with its promise that black could be "free at last" instead increasing all the old pressures on them. *Potential* black voting majorities (that could create normal political power to demand equitable treatment from agricultural agencies) existed in only a handful of Alabama counties, the others sapped of their once-heavy Negro populations by migration. Intimidation of the economically vulnerable and the fearful, combined with inadequate assignment of Federal voting registrars and election observers, insured that even these potential majorities would rarely be realized. Even when there was a Federal presence, intimidation only slightly diminished, so virtually all counties remained under white control and black farmers emboldened to vote, to try for places on the ASCS committees were squeezed as never before. So, with no place to turn for salvation, they at last turned to themselves. And that's why SWAFCA was born.

SWAFCA—the Southwest Alabama Farmers Cooperative—is a desperation measure, a last grasp at survival for farmers who have no option but to try to make it on the land. It started with 850 farmers in 10 Black Belt counties, no money, and the headlong hope of people with nothing to lose.

"The idea was," explains SWAFCA manager Calvin Orsborn who runs the only Negro-owned cotton gin in Alabama, "that these people working together run their own business, set their own standards, find their own markets, seek out their own sources of credit, spend their own money, determine how they will pay themselves a dividend or rebate. This is the whole idea of the cooperative."

All these things added up to new dignity and black manhood for men who had been the least of the earth. The State power structure reacted as if a plague of boll weevils had appeared. After preaching for ages that Negroes were incapable of taking care of themselves, whites were indignant when blacks moved to control their destiny. The late Gov. Lurleen Wallace called it a "Black Panther political conspiracy" and Democratic Congressman William Nichols advised that the State Extension Service and other Alabama agriculture officials should "strengthen" the leadership before any Washington funds were committed. The men of SWAFCA were not rich but they were wise in country lore that cautioned against sending a fox to guard a henhouse. It would be their thing or nothing.

"I kind of get the feeling," says SWAFCA official William Harrison, "that the power structure opposes SWAFCA by virtue of the fact if a man is able to feed himself, he votes the way he wants to. Not only is this true but he does anything else he wants to, and my feeling is that based on the power structure, especially in the South here, he [the white man] wants to continue that master-servant relationship. As long as it exists, you can control the very destiny of people."

(Dr. Fred R. Robertson, Director of the State Extension Service, sees the power structure differently. Asked why his office has never named a Negro as a county extension chairman, he says frankly: "We work on a cooperative basis, about 42 percent of our budget comes from Federal and about 58 from the State and county. And over the years we have, and we still think this is a basically sound idea, to stay with the power structure in order to keep the lines of communication and the rent coming in. . . . I have no built-in prejudice against having a Negro chairman if he is qualified, and I think we will do everything we could to qualify him for this difficult position.")

Cooperatives can put mules out to pasture, put black farmers in the driver's seat

SWAFCA almost died a-borning. But the Office of Economic Opportunity ultimately resisted 19th century pressures in Alabama and Washington, and approved a $400,000 grant to get the co-op established. Membership doubled. A million pounds of produce was handled the first year with primitive marketing facilities. This total climbed and is still climbing in 1968 toward an estimated 24 million pounds by the end of the year. SWAFCA sent its agents to test soil in the fields of black farmers who had been by-passed all their lives by the Extension Service.

(SWAFCA farmers might as well have been planting in the bottom of a lunar crater for all the attention that Extension paid to them, although in theory co-ops are excellent channels for the spread of Extension information. One of Dr. Robertson's appointees as county chairman and presumably satisfactory to the power structure is B. B. Williamson, Sumter County chairman. This is the office where the black female secretary was integrated into a storage room. The farmers joining SWAFCA obviously are seeking help to improve their lot but Mr. Williamson is curiously ignorant about the organization that the State power structure would crush.

"I am not," he tells a questioner, "familiar with their services in our county, sir.")

The advent of SWAFCA means for the first time the black man behind his mules is not alone, has backing, a friendly face at the gin, and a count he can trust. There are educated, business-trained people like Orsborn to translate into dirt plain English USDA directives on loans and ASCS elections, directives that inadvertently or otherwise are couched in the complicated language of bureaucracy that an average college graduate, no less a semi-literate farmer, would be pressed to understand. Collectively, SWAFCA secures small Economic Opportunity loans for men individually too poor to qualify. That had been a cycle within the poverty cycle—no security meant no loans meant no expansion meant no profit meant no security. . .

Mrs. Clara Walker, William Harrison, and Calvin Orsborn, SWAFCA officials,

"Most of these fellows," says Orsborn, "have worked 30 or 40 years in a plantation-type setup. All of the production that they made, everything that they did for 30 or 40 years, the credits did not go to him. The credit went to the plantation. . . which means when this fellow is put off this place or when he decides to move, he has no history. He can show no basic method of repaying a loan and he has no security nine times out of ten."

SWAFCA began writing its history with practical and humane touches. For example, an indebted farmer ordinarily can get no money from a crop until he pays off his note. But SWAFCA put cash, a pocketful of self-respect, in his overalls by paying him 50 percent on the spot when he brought in his produce and deducting the rest from his loan. Membership predictably thrived. But for all its progress, the cooperative is not out of the woods. It needs expensive refrigerated trucks, cooling sheds for perishables, tractors, and field stations so that farmers 50 miles away and hard up for transportation don't have to truck their crop to the Selma headquarters. In Washington, FHA approved an $800,000 loan. It was a modest sum when compared to the millions in outright subsidies paid in Alabama each year to owners like Mr. Hain not to grow crops. In return, FHA insisted that its representatives sit in on all SWAFCA board meetings, countersign checks, set priorities on how and when money was spent, and even approve SWAFCA'S contract with its own lawyers. Most of these conditions were standard ones that a fledging co-op in Minnesota would agree to. But in Minnesota the Federal agents would be trusted.

"As I view the restriction," Harrison says, "it simply means FHA will have a co-op in southwest Alabama."

Robert Bamberg, State FHA Director, is in charge of administering the SWAFCA loan although all the money comes from OEO. He is himself a plantation owner with 20 or so sharecroppers who, he says, clear an average of

$1,000 or $1,200 a year. There is laughter from rural members of the audience at this. Mr. Bamberg is a rough-hewn man of firm opinions who thinks farmers in general are being shortchanged because they can't get fair prices, or parity, for their goods. But he does not seem to think that Alabama Negroes are being particularly shortchanged, either those who would like to work for his agency or borrow from it. Only five of Mr. Bamberg's 203 employees are black, a situation he describes as "equality of opportunity." Exhaustive analyses show that Alabama Negroes as a class are denied every type of loan application more frequently than whites. This follows the 1965 Commission finding that "poor white borrowers received both absolutely and proportionally higher loans than poor Negro borrowers, who constituted a majority of the Negro borrowers." Mr. Bamberg says:

"Well, it goes back to this. In many cases our nigger population has small acreage. You heard a discussion here today, I believe 167 or 170 acres was the largest [Negro] landowner that we had. We had one here said he had 12 acres, one said he had two. Well, there is a tremendous difference what we would loan to a man who has 170 acres and one who had two or 12."

Well, that isn't the point when statistics show whites with two or 12 acres getting more than blacks. But there are other matters Mr. Bamberg might explain. The SWAFCA loan, for example. Why are rigorous FHA standards being applied to the Economic Opportunity loan since these loans were conceived to involve greater repayment risks with wider latitude given the poor borrowers than permitted in conventional loans? (Joseph C. Doherty, an FHA special assistant from Washington, confirms that greater risks must be run and declares he thinks it "absolutely essential" that SWAFCA succeed). Did Mr. Bamberg or his office recommend that FHA sit in on the co-op's board meetings, set priorities, countersign checks, approve attorneys?

"Well, the request came in," he replies. "And then that is when I asked the two men out of Washington [FHA] in the community facility division to come down and they with my chief went to Selma, and worked in making up the agreement."

It is an answer but what the answer is precisely in relation to the question is not clear. Mr. Bamberg complains, with seeming justification, that he lacks enough men and money to run his agency at optimum efficiency. But his exasperation grows as questions turn again and again toward unequal racial treatment, and once when the hearing goes off the official record but is still on public view, he says,

"In the animal kingdom the strong take from the weak and the smart take it away from the strong. It's the same in the human kingdom. If at 6:15 we're gonna innoculate 200 million people and give them the same amount of wealth, at the same minute attrition would set in."

"I think that is kind of cynical of you," Commission Staff Director Taylor replies. "That kind of ignores what our Government and Constitution might be all about."

"Well, I am just giving you the facts of life," Alabama FHA Director Bamberg replies. "I don't know anything about the Constitution or anything else."

Alabama FHA director Robert Bamberg voices some strong opinions

6 Dream weaving

The American Dream has many interpretations but there is one grand theme—this is a country where a man can get ahead if he works hard and lives the life of a good democratic citizen. There may be a certain innocence about this concept but there is also the nobility of a humane and reasonable compact struck between man and his society. Bernard Shambray and Willie James Smith, two black men from Alabama, once believed in the dream.

Shambray, 31, has 12 years of schooling, a janitor's job at $1.64 an hour, and no illusions about his social acceptability to the whites in his home town of Greenville.

"As you know," he tells the hearing, "I'm a poor man. But I find myself—when I want a malted—I have to come 65 miles to Montgomery to enjoy that malted. . . . That doesn't mean we don't have any in our town. . . . Our drug stores abolished their soda fountains when this law [Civil Rights Act of 1964] was passed. [But] we have our Dairy Queens and Dairy Dreams, and the law says you shouldn't have those signs, and they are still there . . . white signs and colored signs and you go here and I go there. Those things are still taking place in my home town."

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 didn't get Shambray a malted in his home town. But he thought it might get him a job. The famous Dan River Mills has a plant there and although it employed only three Negroes in menial jobs out of hundreds of workmen, Shambray decided to try for a job as a weaver. He pressed his application and was hired as a weaver learner.

" I was *hired* as a weaver" he testifies. "But somewhere along the line I got be a floor sweeper, light bulb cleaner, and what have you."

He stuck it out for a while, using a segregated bathroom and watching white workers get promoted over him as the message etched on his mind deeper every day: the broom, not the loom, was going to be his lot at Dan River. Eventually he quit, convinced that the American Dream, Dairy Dreams, or dreams of becoming a weaver could not survive the waking state of things as they are in Greenville. Sitting beside him as he tells his story, Willie James Smith adds a personal dimension of black reality—he is a veteran of six years Army service. Smith joined the Army after high school when he found that a diploma in Prattville only qualified him for the cycle—cutting lawns, washing cars, catching whatever odd job whites offered. After two years in the Army, he came out and looked for a truck driving job in Birmingham.

"I asked this man for a job and he told me to ask Dr. Martin Luther King for a job. Tension was high at the time, it was in 1963 . . . those four little girls hadn't too long before gotten killed, everybody was upset over that."

Smith had not found a home in the Army but he had found a place where his sense of manhood was not abused so he went back to it for four more years and came out a staff sergeant last fall. Things, supposedly, had changed in the interim. He went immediately to the State Employment Service, an arm of his Government, federally financed just like the Army.

"I asked if they could find me some type of job where you have on-the-job training," he says. "And then the man asked me, he asked me why did I get out of the Army. Well, I wanted to, I says, I'm out—but that's something, to ask a man why did you get out of the Army."

He earned $554 a month in the Army; he earns $280 today as a handyman in Alabama.

"Here in Alabama," says veteran Smith in a voice that isn't bitter, merely weary with bitter knowledge, "I don't feel like I'm living. I am only existing. You know, to be demoted from a staff sergeant down to a boy, that is kind of hard to take. And being 30 years old, that's hard to live with. I'm still trying to seek and to plan an escape from the situation."

Willie Smith, shown with his wife, says he was demoted from sergeant to "boy" when he returned to Alabama after Army service

The "situation" is an extension of the poverty cycle from farm to school to factory. In the last quarter century, three times as many blacks as whites gave up farming in the 16-county hearing area. Just as they had lived under a second-class standard of treatment from the white rural society and even from Federal agencies like the Department of Agriculture, they encountered two separate private and public job economies off the farm. The white was an escalator of upward progression, the black a treadmill. Statistics reinforce what Smith and Shambray know from experience. With Negroes accounting for 60 percent of the population, they make up only 7 percent of the sales force, 80 percent of the laborers. In the seven years betwen 1960-67, 20,000 new industrial jobs were created in the area. But Negroes received only 22 percent of them and the overwhelming majority of these were dead end jobs in declining industries.

Black economic powerlessness contrasts with white power everywhere, and white power is ironically manifest, for example, in the Alabama Power Company. Blacks share equally in that company's power only when they turn on a light switch and pay their electric bill. Alabama Power has 5,400 employees but only 472 are Negroes and 75 percent of them are laborers and janitors. A spokesman for the company which does a $2.5 million annual business with the Federal Government and is subject to all nondiscrimination requirements insists things are getting better for Negro job seekers. The proof? In 1966, only three blacks were numbered among 1,300 workers classified as craftsmen, a well-paid category largely consisting of the men who climb the poles to work on power lines. In 1968, the spokesman points out, *four* Negroes are getting their hands on the lines of power, an addition of one in two years.

Public employment closes the door more firmly on the seeking black face than even the private sector. The 14th amendment bans State discrimination on the basis of race but Alabama's State Merit System is merely meretricious. Alabama is the only State that has not filed accord with Federal merit standards of nondiscrimination. Negroes hold only 82 of 560 State jobs in the area and 38 are janitors and part-time workers. Can the rejected black citizen turn, at least, to his Federal Government and find equal treatment denied him by a State that flouts the Constitution?

"The Federal Government's policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of race is not being effectuated in this area," reads the legally-accented language of a Commission staff report. "Negroes do not hold a substantially greater number of governmental jobs covered by Federal regulations prohibiting racial discrimination than they do of State and local jobs that are not covered by a similar prohibition."

Eight predominantly Negro counties have no black postal workers. Is there a dead letter office for Negro job applications? Can prejudice do what rain and sleet cannot, and stay black men from making those appointed rounds that provide a living for white mailmen? One is left to wonder. One wonders also about that State Employment Service where ex-Sergeant Smith found neither employment nor service. It operates under the Labor Department which has established elaborate legal requirements against

discrimination. They read well but certain facts and figures do not make such sanguine reading. Last December, figures showed that nearly 40 percent of nonwhites placed by SES landed in jobs as domestics and yardmen but only 2.5 percent of white applicants were sent to these $20-a-week jobs. SES officials testify that it's possible it refers clients to companies that won't hire Negroes. But the officials say that they never check on this and no Federal compliance official has ever checked on them. With black men pouring off farms and hungering for vocational training, the State has set up *one* Manpower Development and Training Center in the 16-county hearing area—for nurses' aides. The Congress and the Labor Department have specifically ordered the establishment of a State Manpower Advisory Committee with minority representation to get jobless men trained. But again, Federal law in Alabama is a sometime thing and there is no advisory committee.

Alabama offices of the Small Business Administration do not have White and Colored entrances. Still, only five of 219 white collar and professional workers who enter them are Negroes. For Alabama black businessmen who come seeking loans, the doors might as well be bolted. SBA approved $14 million dollars in loans to Alabamians last year. Negroes received one-half of 1 percent of this amount. Paul Bunson, regional SBA chief, says it's largely a matter of people not knowing about the loan programs.

"You can't force people into your office to make loans irregardless of who they are," he says.

To remedy this ignorance, Mr. Bunson declares he has held seminars in all but two Alabama counties, trying to get out the message that money is available. It is discovered that his official itinerary for one seminar included a dinner with industrial and civic leaders at a segregated country club followed the next day by a fish fry at which Negroes were not welcome.

"You have to eat someplace," he counters, and then is reminded that under Federal regulations, officials may not participate in any segregated events.

"If that is what they want," he says, "that is the way it will be."

The law also prohibits SBA loans to companies that discriminate. Mr. Bunson admits his office does not follow up to see if this law is obeyed. But no complaints have ever been received. He explains that there is a compliance division to take care of such matters. The division is in Atlanta, Georgia. It covers the entire southeastern region of the United States. There is one man in the office.

The record of the Commerce Department's Economic Development Administration on examination leaves something to be desired. EDA also makes loans to businessmen but more importantly it provides money for regional development urgently needed in an area with a 40 percent under-employment rate. No Negro has ever received an EDA loan in Alabama. The State's only attempt to establish a development district that might have created a productive future for black and white failed because the white applicants wouldn't permit black representation in their board.

As the evidence of public and private denial to blacks accumulates, the plight of individual black men trying to earn a living becomes impersonalized. It is impossible to feel compassion for a percentile. Even the observer committed to equality finds the edge of his concern blunted by the rasp of statistics, the weight of surveys and grey regulations. But men are what it is all about and sometimes they emerge to tell it like it is, has been, and will be unless there is bedrock economic reform.

Rev. Henry Fortner is a minister with three small churches in York, Alabama. Ministering to the poor puts you on the poverty level yourself, so Rev. Fortner tried to get a job at McGregor's Printing Corporation, a local industry doing 70 percent of its business with the

Rev. Henry Fortner describes job hunting in York, Alabama

Federal Government. McGregor's has a curious hiring system but Rev. Fortner was unaware of it at first. He applied twice at the plant and nothing happened. Then a friend told him to see Warren Grant, the white mayor of York who owns a store where Rev. Fortner buys an occasional suit. Mayor York has all-white help and he has been picketed by civil rights demonstrators. In his capacity as mayor he keeps a photo file of demonstrators and he affirms that no one in that file would make a good clerk because many are "trouble makers." In that same mayoral capacity, Grant is a member of the State Industrial Development Board that helped attract McGregor's to build in York. In the curious scheme of things there, the company uses Mayor Grant as an unpaid screener of potential employees.

"[Mayor Grant] told me that I could go to all the [civil rights] meetings that I could and learn whatever I can learn," says Rev. Fortner of his job interview. "But marching, they don't like to see you marching."

The mayor wrote "something" on his application and Rev. Fortner was promptly hired by a plant official whom, he says, also told him that marching was unpopular at the plant. He has not demonstrated since then. He has taken his place in the McGregor work force, thankful to have a steady job where many black men have nothing and he uses the segregated rest rooms without protest. Has he ever used the white rest room, Mr. Glickstein inquires?

Rev. Fortner: I have.

Mr. Glickstein: Under what circumstances?

Rev. Fortner: I am a janitor.

Mr. Glickstein: You clean it out?

Rev. Fortner: That's right.

Bellamy, Alabama is a short ride from York. The American Can Company, nationally a multimillion dollar Government contractor, has a sawmill operation there. It also runs a fully-segregated company town, complete with shacks and a rickety all-black school owned by American Can down to its broken windows and outdoor privy. The entire complex contains many elements of the black poverty cycle. All 45 white company houses have bathrooms and running water but only eight of the 123 black ones do. The others use privies and outdoor water spigots, one spigot shared by two families. The plant has separate bathrooms for white and black, and, it appears, separate jobs. Only one Negro works in the office and he is an office boy. For the first time in plant history, two Negroes recently were made supervisors—two weeks before the Commission's Montgomery hearing began.

Frank Fenderson works in the American Can sawmill, lives in a company shack with his wife and three small children, shops at a store leased from the company. He is a young man, with large responsibilities and he is not an aggressive witness against his company. If anything, he tells his story reluctantly. Fenderson and his wife bought furniture on credit at the store when he came to work four years ago and the original bill remains a constant in his life. He "thinks" it's about $300 now. Prices at the store run pretty high in comparison to stores outside Bellamy. Fenderson says he receives no bills from the store but every two weeks when his salary check arrives, deductions are already out of it. He produces a stub for two weeks ending April 12, 1968 with gross earnings listed at $139.43. But after working six days a week for two weeks, the amount of the check he pockets is exactly five dollars.

Frank Fenderson lived in the segregated company town operated by American Can in Bellamy, Alabama

John Barnes has worked at the Bellamy mill for 24 years, with time out for World War II, starting long before American Can bought the facility in 1960. He sees conditions through veteran Negro eyes conditioned to caution, trained by experience to turn aside alike from too much hope or despair. And when he is asked whether conditions at Bellamy are better or worse than when he came in 1943, his answer says more than any survey. Because John Barnes is a man who has been through the mill.

"When I came here in 1943," he relates, "the houses and things down there were just about in the same shape [as now]. We have a little improvement in employment. I started out checking lumber, trying to, you know, care for my people. I went to school as I came out of the Army to learn all the facts about lumber, and I went to checking lumber down there and I checked, probably, about 15 years, and all the time I checked down there, I learnt when they get ready to hire a white they'd bring him to me and want me to learn him, and I stayed in the same category all the time. And this white, he would advance, probably he would go somewhere or go to the office and make a salesman, foreman, probably his salary would go to $500 or $600, and mine remained the same all the time.

"A lot of times the Negro wants things but sometimes he believes that if he asks for it, he won't get it. That's why, probably, they haven't asked for it. I know they want improvements. I talk with some of them in the last week, and they say they want improvement, they want restrooms in the house, different things. They want to beautify their houses and different things."

John Barnes stops, and then he adds:

"Just some of the same things that the whites have."

Veteran American Can employee John Barnes watched promotions by-pass him and go to white workers for 25 years

AMERICAN CAN COMPANY
STOP
WARNING
PLANT PROPERTY
PROCEED AT YOUR RISK

7 Paper compliance

The Federal Government, required by its own law to insist on nonsegregated, equal job opportunities from its army of more than 100,000 contractors and unnumbered subcontractors, has never cancelled a contract for civil rights violation in Alabama or anywhere else in the country.

There is betrayal in this record. It says that the Government is reneging on its pledge that business will play fair with all citizens or suffer the consequence it dreads most—losing money. Inside Alabama and outside Alabama, American tax money is subsidizing segregation in every plant where black is relegated to an inferior status or where he must be a superman to climb into elevated white promotion ranks. If a company is manufacturing faulty grenade launches, Defense Department officials will get the deficiency corrected immediately or find a new contractor. They understand that lives are at stake. But black lives are at stake at Dan River Mills, American Can, and McGregor, there are gross defects in human relations, the product is not up to American standards. Yet few in Government seem to understand this and there is a singular reluctance or inability by the most powerful Government on earth to enforce this one contract clause.

"I would say that is due in part to the fact that 95 percent of the contracting agencies' staff and attention and desires are aimed at awarding contracts," says Leonard Biermann, Senior Compliance Officer for the Labor Department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance. "Only 5 percent or less of that contracting agency's day to day activity and maybe 1 percent is aimed at concerning themselves about equal employment opportunity."

Mr. Biermann lays it on the line although he is optimistic that things are changing for the better. But neither his candor nor optimism is much comfort to the black man who wants to be out of the cycle and into a job with a future beyond the length of a broom handle. Change is too slow, promises too vague, reality too hard. He wants work but he is enveloped in a miasma of explanations, rationalizations, and contradictions that settles over the hearing like an impenetrable fog as company and Government witnesses make their special pleadings. Often it is difficult for the Commission, with its expert staff and special zeal for the task, to cut through and identify the culprit responsible for the law-breaking. Some company spokesmen self-righteously defend themselves by blaming labor unions. They say that union seniority systems make it all but impossible to promote Negroes to better jobs because in the days before Title VII black time accumulated in a menial line of progression different from white. A black may have worked for a company 20 years cleaning out bathrooms. Now he would like to go on the assembly line but his union seniority there is zero. The company officials shrug; suddenly impotent before labor power, they would like to cooperate but . . .

A recent Federal court decision weighting mill seniority as an advancement factor may break this union barrier. But unionism isn't the prime culprit, either. Allied Paper Company in Jackson, Alabama, does not have a union. It does have Federal contracts. Only 47 of 450 workers are Negroes. There is no Negro on the clerical staff and no Negroes in any skilled positions. A company representative says that Allied's Federal client—the General Services Administration (GSA)—has never questioned the absence of blacks from skilled jobs although a GSA man has said it would be "very pleasing" if one of the next three clerical workers hired was dark.

Finally to the chorus of disclaimers are added the voices of Government agency men. They demonstrate persuasively that their staffs are too small to attempt anything more than a passing shot at enforcing compliance and keeping contractors racially honest. The means they are provided in comparison to the job that must be done are so scanty that failure has been legislated into the compliance system. Thus the buck is passed from business to union to Government, and if the Commission is sometimes frustrated in its inquiry, one wonders what chance the individual black man has to crack the system, standing alone at the plant gate, trying to get past the amorphous forces that are keeping him out.

What can he make of the Alice in Wonderland hiring system at McGregor in York which grows "curioser and curioser" the more it

American Can's Government client, the General Services Administration, had never checked on segregated facilities operated by the company

is explained? Mayor Grant, the photo enthusiast (he boasts he has even taken the picture of a Commission investigator) and civil rights critic, screens applicants but denies any role in hiring them. The mayor's role is hard to pin down. He is asked whether any applicants he grades highly ever are rejected at the plant.

"Plenty of them," he replies.

Are any he grades low hired?

"Well," he says, "I never know who they hire after the application goes out there."

Then how does he know "plenty" of those he grades highly are rejected? Company spokesmen try to clarify things but somehow more obscurantism develops. McGregor vice president P.H. Martin first refutes Rev. Fortner's charge of segregated bathrooms. Well, not quite. There *are* two doors side-by-side marked "Gentlemen" in this plant that was built to order for McGregor's.

"I don't know why," Mr. Martin says. "This building was planned by different people . . we haven't investigated very deeply. . . If there is a separation by the people it is by choice. We don't literally show them the way to the men's room."

Mr. Martin objects to the word "screening" as applied to Mayor Grant's task for McGregor's.

"He does not literally screen out."

But moments later he says that when a job opens, three applications are taken from the file and brought to—Mayor Grant.

"We have no insight into as to whether they are white or colored," he says. "We send them to him and receive all three of them back with his advisory evaluation indicated on them. At this point we call them into our plant for a personal interview. . . ."

Mr. Martin says his work force is completely integrated, pointing out that the Government Printing Office has had nothing but praise after three inspections.

Mayor Grant of York, Alabama

The way other companies see themselves and the way Government agencies see them brings the dilemma of the black job seeker into sharper focus. At Dan River in Greenville where Bernard Shambray once came to weave, there are no Government contracts although nationwide the company holds many despite a dismal racial employment record. Dan River, a Plans for Progress employer, nationally hires only 2,400 Negroes out of 20,000 employees, while most of its facilities are in heavily black areas.

At any rate, the Greenville plant is supposed to comply with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 whether or not that particular plant ever sees Government money. A parent company like Dan River Mills with Government contracts must keep all its branches in compliance even though individual ones are not involved in Government manufacture. With three black workers out of 200 employes at Dan River in Greenville, certain questions therefore naturally arise. Plant Superintendent J. L. Cantrell tries to answer them. He says that a changeover in looms temporarily suspended Mr. Shambray's weaving apprenticeship but indicates he might have made it eventually if he had not quit. He is not so enlightening on the scarcity of Negroes in the plant. He says the plant isn't making much money today and so it can't hire inexperienced men and train them to weave. But what about yesterday, all those earlier years when Negroes could have been hired and trained?

"I don't know," he says. "I wasn't here then."

How many Negroes have applied since Mr. Shambray quit? Mr. Cantrell does not know. Have any applied for positions other than sweeper? He does not know. But there *is* a definite answer to the question, has a Government contract compliance officer ever visited his mill?

"No sir," answers Mr. Cantrell.

It's questionable whether there ever will be a visit. Kenneth Eppert is Chief Compliance Officer handling Defense Department contracts for the Atlanta region. Asked what he is going to do about Dan River in Greenville, he replies:

"Well, since the facts have been called to my attention I am authorized to place that, of course, and would be authorized to place it prior to the facts being called to my attention on my quarterly forecast schedule. And provided I did not have directed review from outside agencies, such as pre-award and/or complaint investigation, and/or directed reviews from

higher authority, we would place a man into that particular Dan River spot to conduct a compliance review."

Yes. Of course. With that point cleared up, Mr. Eppert goes on to explain that he has 11 professionals working for him but needs 70. His office is supposed to check 5,818 contractor facilities and their myriad sub-contractor facilities. Since Jan. 1, 1966, he and his staff have only visited 473 of the facilities. Ninety five percent of them, he says, should be re-visited but second visits have been made only to 10 percent. And getting back to that Greenville situation. . .

"This is more work than I can get done and that is directed so I will never get over to what Mr. Glickstein wants me to do, and that is get over to Dan River and look at Greenville with this workload and not enough people to do it. . . . If you want me to do half the job, give me 35 people. If you want me to do a quarter of the job, give me 10, but if you want me to do any kind of a job for you, I can't do it with the small staff I have. . . ."

The American Can Company sawmill in Bellamy, with its quasi-company store, segregated housing, and rickety Negro school, has never been visited by American Can's Government client, the General Services Administration. Hugh C. Sloane, mill manager, concedes that the white houses have bathrooms and running water, that the black school is heated by one coal stove and has no bathroom, that the company leases out the store but deducts employees' bills from their paychecks. (But those deductions, he announces, are going to be discontinued.) It is correct that the only Negro clerical worker is an "office type boy," that the first Negro assistant supervisor was named coincident with the hearing. But Owen Hansen, resident manager, puts all these facts together and reaches the conclusion that despite staff competition and union problems

". . . we have done our best to maintain a reasonable level of efficiency in our mill. We have continued to do our best to upgrade the facilities in the town of Bellamy, to provide more amenities in the housing area to the extent that we can economically do so and still stay in business."

The night before the hearing, all Bellamy workers including the two black men who were to testify had been called together and told by the company that "open housing" would be discussed at the hearing. Then they were warned that "there is a chance because of the law we may have to stop all renting soon." There is no explanation why obedience to a Federal law should persuade American Can to stop renting its houses and dislocate its workmen. Or why the plant management should assemble its men and raise the spectre of drastic change on the eve of the Federal hearing.

American Can sells to the General Services Administration so three GSA officials present themselves. GSA does a $1,353 million business nationally with contractors, more than $15 million in Alabama. Applied Paper and Alabama Power contract with it. Like SBA, GSA has *one* man in Atlanta assigned full-time to check civil rights compliance for the entire southeastern region of the United States. The files of the Atlanta office contain a memo saying that Alabama Power with 472 Negroes out of 5,400 employees has "restricted minority group employment at all facilities surveyed." Robert Harlan, Contract Policy Officer, explains that no action was taken because the status of utilities in respect to equal opportunity regulations was uncertain.

"This is a sole source of supply," he says. "And if you cancel a contract why then everybody is using candles or oil lamps or they are burning wood if it is a coal utility."

The multifarious strength of the Federal Government apparently cannot hold a candle to the energy of Alabama Power. But what about American Can? Mr. Glickstein likens Bellamy to a town one might read about in an 18th century novel and finds it a source of "great curiosity" why GSA can do nothing about it. Mr. George Dorsey, Director of the Civil Rights Program Policy Staff, pleads an inadequate force and overwhelming obligations. Mr. Glickstein persists. American Can has another plant in Naheola with a $1.7 million GSA contract for toilet paper.

Mr. Glickstein: Do you think if that toilet paper was of inferior quality, if it wasn't being produced correctly, GSA would take very fast steps to deal with that?

Mr. Harlan: No question about it.

Mr. Harlan goes on to say that understaffed conditions make compliance a "horrendous task." And Mr. Dorsey concedes the compliance record is "very poor."

"If we are going to stop this rioting and looting and burning," he declares, "we have got to accelerate the implementation of the regulations and the laws that are on the books."

It is a conclusion that Willie James Smith, Bernard Shambray, Rev. Fortner, John Barnes, and Frank Fenderson, who have never rioted, burned, or looted, but who know what it is to be victimized, might agree with.

8 The welfare state

Welfare in Alabama is where you go when you are going nowhere. It is what you are when you are nobody. It is the logical extension of the poverty cycle from black men denied a living on farms and in factories to their black women and children consigned to a limbo of hungry days endlessly reiterated where need always exceeds have and hope never catches up with is.

Various experts on welfare come to Montgomery to testify before the Commission. One expert is Mrs. Helen Randale. She lives in Forkland, Greene County, with her six children and they exist on $54 a month Aid to Dependent Children. Twenty two dollars of this goes to buy food stamps worth $72. The remainder is supposed to purchase clothing, and pay rent, light, and doctor bills. The Greene County Health Department supplies some medical examinations for the indigent who use its White or Colored entrances. But Mrs. Randale must also go to a private doctor and buy all drugs her family requires. This is expensive because she has cancer.

"And my little boy, his nerves are bad," she says, her tone uncomplaining, her voice merely reciting one of the many unpleasant facts of life she must deal with. "I have one that needs eyeglasses, and also myself, I can hardly see at times."

But every cloud has a silver lining and the Randale family illnesses reap their own reward. When she brings her doctor's receipt to the food stamp office, the price of the stamps is reduced from $22 to $10.

Mrs. Randale, an attractive woman about 40, only began receiving welfare this year. Local Alabama offices have broad discretionary powers to grant or withhold aid, or limit the amount, and the particulars of Mrs. Randale's past inability to get welfare would in themselves require a hearing to determine. Whatever the cause, the effect was hard times with six children, no husband, and no income except what her young sons could bring in.

"My boys went out and helped cut wood," she says. "Done whatever the Man had for them to do. My neighbor next door, he helped me out and gave me some bread for the children. My son-in-law, he gave me $5 for the food stamps."

Here was another silver lining. Because in those pre-welfare days she had no steady income, Mrs. Randale's stamps then only cost her $3 for $72. (The two dollars remaining from the son-in-law's five was not found money, however. She paid that to a neighbor to drive her from her rural home to the county's one central food stamp office many miles distant). When the $54 a month welfare began rolling in, the stamp price was increased to its present $22. This is standard procedure in Alabama and elsewhere, and frequently creates this anomaly—in counties where free Federal commodities are distributed, welfare families may be too "rich" to qualify while in food stamp counties they may be too "poor" to buy them. Stamps are usually purchased in one lump sum payment each month, a payment that often is as high as 45 percent of a family's entire welfare check. Since most of a family's income must go for food anyway and since stamps are worth more than the purchaser pays for them, inability or refusal to make the lump sum purchase does not make apparent economic sense. Why not take advantage of the stamp bonus?

A complex of practical and psychological reasons exists but the overriding reason is that the stamps, on the average, last a family between two and three weeks. When they run out, food must be bought on credit from the local store. Credit, therefore, continues as the dominant factor in the poor family's economy and must be maintained. When the welfare check arrives, settling up at the store has priority, then all the other basic bills have to be satisfied, and so many dollars soon slip out that there are not enough left to meet the monthly food stamp assessment. This assessment is inflexible. If a family's price for $70 worth of stamps is set at $30 and the purchaser shows up with only $28, he cannot, for example, buy $65 worth. He cannot buy any.

However unjust, contradictory, or self-defeating this Department of Agriculture regulation might appear, the effect of its enforcement is reflected in these statistics: from Oct. 1, 1966 to Sept. 30, 1967, three-fourths of the public assistance recipients in Black Belt Counties with food stamp programs were not participating. In four counties covered by the hearing (Bullock, Dallas, Greene, and Hale), only 3 to 12 percent of those getting food stamps were on welfare. During the same period, 63 percent receiving free commodities throughout the State were *not* on welfare; 75 percent of Alabamians purchasing food stamps were *not* getting public assistance. Whatever the combination of reasons responsible for these figures, they mean that Federal programs to feed the poor are not reaching a majority of the poorest.

For Mrs. Randale and her six children, getting by on welfare is—in Black Belt parlance—a scuffle. She must budget pennies with a care that most American mothers reserve for dollars. There is no margin for error yet errors have a way of dogging the needy. For example, she testifies that the County Health Department made an appointment for her to have an eye examination at the medical center in Tuscaloosa, about 50 miles away. No transportation was provided so she paid a neighbor $10 to take her there. But when she got to Tuscaloosa. the physician's office at the medical center decided there had been some mistake.

"Well, I can't hear so good," Mrs. Randale relates, "I thought the lady told me—I wanted to sit down and she told me to go outside. But I thought she was going to wait on me. But my daughter told me—she asked her because I didn't understand. She said go outside, she had a book full, she couldn't wait on me. So, I had to go back home."

Mr. Glickstein: You paid $10 to go up there and you thought you had an appointment, and you had to go back home?

Mrs. Randale: I had to go back home.

Mr. Glickstein: Have you gone back since then?

Mrs. Randale: No sir, I haven't. She treated me so cold I did never go back.

Mrs. Randale's experience in trying to raise her children and care for her own illnesses on $54 a month are typical of Alabama welfare. Some cases are more desperate, some a little easier. Stories vary in particulars but a requirement to "scuffle" is built into the system of Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), the State's major welfare program that cares for children who are deprived of the care and support of one or both parents by reason of death, illness, or continued absence from the home. Nearly 70 percent of the recipients throughout Alabama are black and more than 90 percent are in the 16-county area. Five years ago the Alabama Department of Pensions and Security decided that the minimum needed by an ADC family of four to pay for food, clothing, shelter, and other necessities was $177 a month. The Alabama Legislature at first voted only enough funds to provide *one-third* of this minimum budget. Five years later, the most provided for an ADC family of four is *one half* the amount deemed necessary in 1963, roughly $15 a month per child or about $876 a year (The national average is $31.61 a month with the range running from an incredible $8.45 in Mississippi to New York's bountiful $65.05).

One final statistic puts Alabama welfare figures into grim perspective. The Federal poverty index estimates that a rural family of four with a female head requires $2,320 a year to obtain a minimal nutritional diet and other necessities. Even allowing for the cash-stretching bonus of food stamps, an Alabama ADC family of four receiving $876 a year gets by on *less than 50 percent of what the National Government says is the bare level of poverty existence.*

So it is not surprising when Mrs. Elizabeth Hutton of Eutaw with 18 assorted children,

grandchildren, and transient young wards living in her shack off $127 a month welfare says:

"Right now, at the time the children come out of school, they are almost naked."

Or when Mrs. Mary Wade of Dallas County, supporting eight children and two grandchildren off $305, sums up their life by saying:

"We don't have enough of nothing right now."

A common theme of inferior and segregated service runs through the stories of all the welfare mothers despite strict regulations to the contrary from the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare which provides most of the welfare money spent by Alabama and the other States. The women tell of colored and white entrances at local offices, of white faces deciding which black person gets welfare and how much, of treatment sometimes rude or arbitrary. But Mrs. Clellan Wilkinson, director of Pensions and Security in Dallas County where Mrs. Wade lives, insists that ". . . we are interested in our colored people. . . . I want them to grow."

"We have a large building, an ante bellum building," explains Mrs. Wilkinson, a handsome, silver-haired lady whose family goes back five generations in Selma, the county seat, and who described herself as "Miz Welfare." "[It] is beautifully arranged and beautiful as far as tradition is concerned and also efficiency."

Does the tradition include separate entrances for black and white?

"Well, my comments are this: That there is no sign saying 'black,' 'white,' 'colored,' 'green,' 'yellow,' or 'pink.' I will say that all of us come in the back door and most everybody else comes in the front door."

Negroes, then, come in the front door?

"They all come in the front door," Mrs. Wilkinson replies. "It's the white people that come in the back door, the case workers as I said to you."

Inside these doors, Mrs. Wilkinson's staff of 30 is all white—with four exceptions. Mrs. Wilkinson explains the exceptions:

"One is a maid and three are trustees."

Trustees of what? Some Negro school, perhaps Selma University?

"They are trustees of the Dallas County Sheriff's Department," she says. "That is, County Court."

Child welfare payments are less than half of what the Federal Government says is needed for bare existence

They are, to be perfectly clear, prisoners permitted to work outside the jail. Mrs. Wilkinson says that her State office gives her a list of prospective employees which she goes over and then passes on to her Welfare Board with recommendations. This has been the practice since Mrs. Wilkinson became director nearly 25 years ago. It seems possible that over a quarter of a century *one* qualified Negro might have been interested in becoming a Dallas County case worker. Civil Rights Commission member Mrs. Frankie Freeman asks:

"Has your board ever recommended any Negro case worker to you?"

"That's a real interesting question," replies Mrs. Wilkinson. "I'm glad that you asked it. We have discussed that several times. [But] we never have had any qualified. . . . If a person is qualified, I'd have no hesitancy in accepting someone. . . . But we've got to also realize that we can't discriminate against the white as well as the colored."

Ruben King, commissioner of the State Department of Pensions and Security, rejects any suggestions that Alabama welfare is discriminatory although his department has only 17 Negroes out of 1,700 employees.

"I would say this," he says. "If this panel was as interested in getting to the truth as it is instead of trying to make the white community in this State look bad, I think probably more could come out of this hearing."

(A month after he testifies, the U.S. Department of Justice brings suit charging eight Alabama agencies with discrimination against Negroes. Mr. King's Department of Pensions and Security is one of those named).

But if Mr. King is defensive about race, he is frank about the rigors of poverty and the ambivalent role welfare plays in the lives of the poor. Although the directress of his Butler County office has told the Commission that Negroes simply do not want to work, he says:

". . . it's hard for me to think that women in this State are going to have children for $15 a month. . . . In fact, I think that most of the people on welfare resent the fact that they are on welfare and given an opportunity will come off welfare."

He also takes a humanistic view of hungry people and what they will do given a few extra dollars in their pocket. No less a Government authority than Agriculture Secretary Freeman has insisted that the poor must pay for food stamps since they might otherwise spend their money frivolously on things like bingo. Some white Alabama officials have opposed the introduction of free Federal commodities for the same reason or out of fear that it would cut the income of store owners. But Mr. King says of the free commodities:

"There was always apprehension on the part of merchants that because people were receiving some $7 to $9 a month in food, that they would lose some sales. But this is not the case because with your [welfare] payments in this State being what they are, the people have to spend everything that they have anyway. So instead of maybe spending all of their money on food, they may have money to buy some drugs or medicine, or a warm coat."

Finally, he is outspoken in his concern over Alabama's monthly payments to dependent children.

"Fifteen dollars is not enough. There are many children in this State, both black and white, who go to bed hungry at night. And

Food Stamps never last out the month and when they stop hunger starts

I am not going to sit here and deny it. I am greatly disturbed about it and members of my staff are greatly disturbed about it."

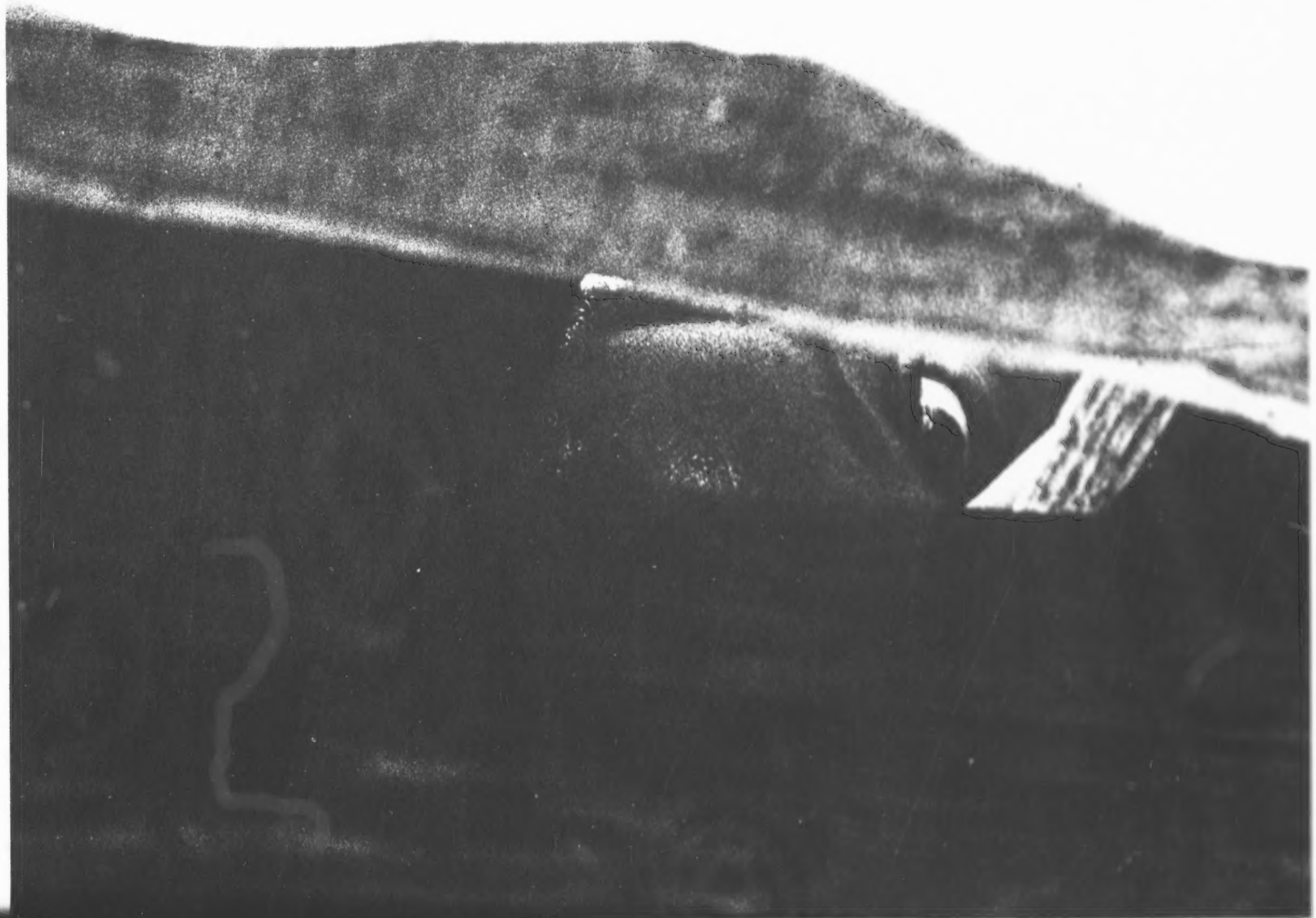
Mr. King says that Alabama just doesn't have enough money to go around, even with the Federal Government contributing 83 percent of ADC funds. In 1967, Alabama forfeited $11.6 million in additional Federal child welfare money that would have enabled it to raise ADC payments to around the national average. But Alabama would not put up a "matching" 17 percent for its children.

Compounding their plight is Alabama's sense of welfare priority that produces a State law making it mandatory that 75 percent of *all* welfare funds allocated must go to Old Age Assistance. What remains then is divided among the young, the blind, and the disabled. Where ADC payments are only half what the Department of Pensions and Security says is the minimum needed to support a child, Old Age payments are nearly 70 percent of the estimated need. Mr. King says it has been "traditional" to have a very active program for the aged. He denies any racial overtones, demonstrating that the percentage of Negroes receiving old age benefits is greater than the percentage of blacks in the State. While this is true, it is also true that elderly pensioners have always been a tractable, dependable part of the Alabama body politic. On the other hand, civil rights activists point out that most ADC recipients are black children from young families susceptible to and often participating in the Movement. The activist theory argues that Alabama seeks to make life in the State as difficult as possible for them, thereby encouraging migration. They note there is no ADC provision for the children of unemployed parents in a region where black joblessness is rife. Fathers unable to support their children often leave their families, thus qualifying them for welfare payments that, however small, are more than nothing. Mothers left behind can be forced by welfare authorities to take jobs or lose benefits. These invariably are field or service jobs like domestics, and inadvertently or otherwise a ready pool of cheap black female labor is created through the welfare system.

Welfare children have been the victims of the State's so-called "substitute father" law which removed them from the rolls if their mother was found to be cohabitating with a man, occasionally or regularly, or if a man of even paternalistic age was living with the family. Midnight raids and daily snooping were the enforcement techniques of this law. Whatever moral or economic justifications Alabama legislators found for it, the effect was to visit the "sins" of a parent on a child. The penance increased deprivation. The Supreme Court eventually upheld a lower court invalidation of the "substitute father" law but by that time thousands of children, most of them black, had already been eliminated from ADC. The Commission finds that in the aftermath of the Supreme Court ruling, many eliminated families have not been returned to welfare. Pensions and Security announced over radio and TV that certain unspecified changes had been made in the welfare law and some offices made a conscientious effort to inform the dropped clients that they once again were eligible. But others left it up entirely to the clients and, out of ignorance or reluctance to revive an unpleasant experience with authority, thousands of mothers never returned to claim their legal benefits.

Whatever motives impel Alabama to hound a mother, or skimp on a child to salve a grandfather, it is clear that the State's welfare system is inadequate, demeaning to recipients, and destructive to a healthy interracial social order. Welfare Director King—plainly no friend of integration and inclined to criticize Washington rather than Montgomery—nevertheless will not justify that system. In a few incisive sentences, he says all there is to say about it:

"If you cannot give children adequate food, if they do not get adequate education, they are not going to be able to compete in society today. And your vicious cycle of welfare will continue if these people are not able to compete. Then society will leave them along the roadside."



9 "To live in freedom, to die a timely death"

The end of the hearing does not insure the beginning of change. Change comes hard anywhere when race relations, with their economic, social, and psychological complexities, are the issue. This is especially apparent in rural Alabama where traditions that limit life for some men are a way of life for others. Old forms block the way of new visions. Racial myths and economic realities combine to thwart black aspirations and to make whites uneasy warders of despair.

If the testimony at the two hearings 10 years apart proves anything it is that the Federal Government *can* be the prime instrument of change. Whether it *will* be an instrument of significant change is uncertain, the evidence mixed. C. Erskine Smith, a white lawyer from Birmingham and Chairman of the Alabama State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, brings an analytical eye and compassionate mind to the plight of poor black citizens in his State. He speaks as a member of an old and respected Alabama family, and as a contemporary observer disciplined by law to avoid hyperbole. He says:

". . . the Federal programs which are designed to aid the poor have had little impact on the black poor of rural Alabama. These people, who have had their hopes raised again and again as they were told of many Federal programs which were supposedly written with them in mind, find that in reality they were empty promises and a cruel hoax."

Mr. Smith says that Community Action Programs too often are controlled by that ubiquitous exploiter of the poor, the power structure. He finds that ". . . the only antipoverty programs which offer any real promise are those which are funded directly from Washington and have by-passed the local CAP." Even Washington fails where education is concerned. According to Mr. Smith, all the HEW guidelines and directives have not appreciably changed black education from its habitual state—segregated and inferior. The latest HEW pledge of an integrated Alabama school system by 1969-70 at the latest draws this comment:

". . . the black people of Alabama don't believe these words and they told us so in countless meetings across this State. We say it is a serious thing when people have lost faith in their Government."

He sees improvement in registration and voting despite an inadequate Federal presence with examiners sent to only 12 counties. But gains are under continuous pressure from the forces of recidivism.

"The 'rules of the game' are being changed constantly to maintain white supremacy," he tells the hearing which receives testimony of filing fees jumping 900 percent when Negroes seek to become candidates. "Fear is still a formidable enemy and the lack of economic security among rural Negroes remains a serious obstacle. Again we have a vicious cycle, the lack of economic security leads to the lack of effective use of the franchise, which contributes to the lack of economic security."

Mr. Smith feels there is better administration of justice and a reduced incidence of violence against civil rights workers in Alabama. But the number of workers is also reduced sharply in comparison to the force that worked in the violent days a few years back, and he warns that ". . . if there were an increase in direct confrontations there would be an increase in acts of violence. The Civil Rights Act of 1968," Mr. Smith continues, "should be of some value in this area, if it is vigorously enforced by Federal authorities."

Federal enforcement of equal job opportunity laws is so lax that he calls this an era of "paper compliance." Mr. Smith and his Advisory Committee find "little evidence of really affirmative action on the part of employers to recruit, train, and employ Negroes." The record in agriculture with USDA programs, he reports, is similarly dismal.

"We are convinced," Mr. Smith concludes, "that the problems of the rural poor cannot be solved by patching up existing programs through changes in existing regulations. We think new structures and new personnel who are sympathetic to the needs of the people are needed, along with new programs."

Rev. Kenneth L. Buford lives in Macon County, home of Tuskegee Institute, and he is Alabama State field director for the NAACP. Neither radical nor reluctant to press for equal rights, Rev. Buford had testified at the first

Montgomery hearing in 1958. Ten years later he is asked what major changes have taken place in the State since then and the veteran of 30 years in the Civil Rights Movement replies:

"I would say some improvements have been made. I hesitate to use the word 'progress' but I would say that there has been some improvement."

Rev. Buford's own Macon County probably has seen more progress or improvements than any other. But it is unique in being able to draw on Tuskegee's staff and students, and on black employees in a large Veterans Administration hospital for political activists economically independent of whites. Improvements in the black community have centered around the political process. Even before the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Federal court orders opened the way for the county's four-to-one Negro majority to vote and hold office (Rev. Buford himself was registered under court order after a white registrar decided he was not "intelligent enough" to be an Alabama voter). Black men on the Board of Revenue have meant paved streets in Negro neighborhoods historically served by dirt roads, muddy or dusty depending on the season. There are local government salaries shared by black residents where such paychecks used to be a white monopoly. There is even the first Negro sheriff in the South since Reconstruction, Lucius Amerson, who says he considers himself "an American first, and a man second, and a Negro third." Whites did not easily accept the notion of law in the form of a gun on a black man's hip, a badge on a black breast. But Amerson handled things with a forceful, confident cool.

"I don't know what is so different about my being sheriff than a sheriff in Mississippi," he says. "Other than I don't beat up folks."

Sheriff Lucius Amerson testifies before Commission

But the racial millenium has not reached Macon County. Even there, the grip of racism is tenacious on affairs public and private. Some white churches still close doors in the face of blacks come to worship. Black farmers, like the witness Hosea Guice, still must fight white-dominated officialdom to get what is theirs by right under Agriculture Department programs. Whites control the board of trustees at all-black Tuskegee and the Institute has experienced the kind of student revolts occurring at Howard and Columbia Universities. Militant black youth regard the pace of progress in Alabama as rank gradualism and the election of one black sheriff as irrelevant when measured against the scope of extra-legal white actions that render the black franchise impotent throughout most of the State. Student Leon Kennedy is fired with suspicions about the white man who has profited through racism and he tells the hearing that he mistrusts both The Man and the capacity of his system to reform itself.

"He has all kinds of tricks to use against our people," young Kennedy says. "Like you've got these people up here right now believing that the Commission is going to do something about this problem. And that is not going to happen. You cannot make a law and expect that law to be followed. The laws have been broken for years and years. . . . You cannot just in one day pass a law in Congress and expect everybody in the United States to follow that law. And you cannot have a marshal at every white man's door in Greenville, Alabama. . . . You can't have a marshal at every mill where a black man wants to be hired. And if you get discriminated against or shot dead tonight, who are you going to call? The Commission?"

Bitter experience leads to bitter conclusions. Kennedy has grown up black in Alabama and he says:

"People . . . are tired, very, very tired of all of this trickery up and down. And something is going to come out of it one way or the other. Give us half of the country . . . or put us out of the country. Or kill us all."

But for all the bitterness that 18 years of Alabama living has produced in him, he does not want to uproot himself.

"I want to live in the South," he says. "The tropical area, the heat, geographical location and everything. I just dig the South period."

So do a lot of older black Alabamians. It is a constant theme in all the testimony. Bernard Shamberg whose dreams of becoming a weaver

were rudely awakened once tried emigrating to New York to work. But he soon returned to Alabama.

"I guess I'm just a country boy," he says. "I really liked the country life rather than the city life."

Roy Thomas, evicted from his Sumter County farm after a lifetime there, was offered a chance to go North by a nephew.

"He said people in the North were just as bad as the weather," Mr. Thomas recalls. "So I didn't think I wanted to get mixed up in that."

Willie Smith, demoted from staff sergeant to "boy" on his return to Alabama from the service, tried Chicago briefly. Neither he nor his Alabama-born wife was impressed.

"If things were changed, I would love living here," Mrs. Smith says. "Because living in Chicago, or when I was in New York, they are so crowded there. And I like to live in a house to myself, where I could have a big yard for my children to play in. I would prefer living here in Alabama where I could have a lot of air, fresh air, and a big house to myself."

"Actually, I don't think I liked Chicago," her husband testifies. "It seemed to be—well, it is too fast for me . . . everybody from down here is up there. . . . I know more peoples in Chicago than I do at home since I been back home because all my friends and classmates —I can't think of but one classmate that is here now that graduated from high school with me."

It is eloquent, if wistful, testimony to the greatest migration of modern times, the movement of black from South to North, more than three million people in 25 years. But the hearing destroys the fiction that the North is seen as a Promised Land by black people eager to leave their Southland. The human truth permits no such Northern conceit. Home in the South, for all its poverty and exploitation, contains a familiar ambience, a link to past generations, the feel of belonging to the land despite white assertion that black exists there only through white sufferance. To go North means to exchange known country graces for the alien squalor of a ghetto with its dangers and disillusions. The ghetto is a last resort, an undependable refuge from intolerable social and economic oppression, and families driven to it do not carry great expectations in their Southern baggage, only small hope. The poverty cycle that has betrayed them in Alabama or Georgia too often continues that betrayal in New York or Illinois. The West Side of Chicago works no magic to undo years of slack education in Bellamy, a Greenville broompusher is not transformed into a computer specialist on establishing residence in Bedford-Stuyvesant. No "place" can revitalize bodies run down beyond their years or make a shiny receptacle of minds that have become rusty buckets. Children are dropped into the tough new world of the ghetto, a world often physically brutal and spiritually barren. Some become the living stuff of riot, others drift for the rest of their lives in urban backwaters never touched by those ongoing currents of modern American life. Their personal tragedies are unrecorded. But contemporary history is writing large the price society pays for their failure.

Faced with the Northern alternative, it does not take much to induce some black people to trick it out in Alabama. Lewis Black is director of the Rural Advancement Project for the Alabama Council on Human Relations. The title is cumbersome but the thrust of the Project is not encumbered by titular or theoretical burdens. It simply tries to help those who are struggling against severe odds to live decently in Alabama. A handful of credit unions, quilting bees, and tiny cooperatives have been formed with little or no help from local or Federal agencies.

Lewis Black talks about the struggle to live decently

Mr. Black says:

". . . the awareness of the services that these people can receive from these agencies has been systematically kept from these people because of this bureaucracy. Everything comes through the same power structure folks. And when I say power structure folks it may be the banker, or it may be the person in the Extension agency, it might be the person who is FHA supervisor, it might be the mayor of the town or it could be the judge, or city councilmen. . . ."

Mr. Black's obvious love is cooperatives and he draws a nice distinction between them and the usual business enterprise.

"When you set up corporations," he says, "the main emphasis is put on money, the capital outlay that people have. But when you set up a cooperative, the main emphasis is put on people."

People like the 38 ladies from Hale and Greene Counties who had been $15 and $20 a week domestics, cleaning up after white people and watching white children while their own watched each other. Instead of fleeing North or continuing their domestic indenture, they formed the Greene-Hale Sewing Cooperative, a cottage industry. It holds no lucrative Government contracts like Dan River and it does not subsist on Federal loans. Starting with nothing, the co-op has survived through determination and a few hundred occasional dollars from concerned private agencies like the Southern Regional Council, American Friends, and the Sharecroppers Fund.

"We gave written proposals to several agencies and foundations," Mr. Black reports. "And the only thing that we have received from them is that they are just considering, that they are looking into it. But it is difficult for real—when I say 'real' I mean low income people—to get money from Government agencies because people have got to see some feasibility there on a project before they put money into it. So these ladies have to start somewhere to show that they have the skills and the techniques to show this thing as being feasible."

They are showing their thing. The co-op that once measured output in two or three garments a day now counts production in the hundreds. A few Northern contracts have been obtained. Nobody is getting rich, it is slow going economically but "the main emphasis is put on people." People are being trained so that someday, even should the co-op fail, they will come away with a skill that can keep them out of a white family's kitchen. If Alabama industry will hire them.

Here and there the Commission unearths cause for cautious optimism. There is the Dixie Shoe Corporation in Eufaula that has been fully integrated since it began operations five years ago. Rural blacks and whites were trained together under Federal programs and today some make as much as $3 an hour. Plant manager Harold Becker's testimony is a rebuttal to those who have excused job discrimination on the grounds that ill-educated field hands can't qualify for factory employment. He says that those hired were ". . . farmers, peanut farmers, cotton farmers, regular farmers." Did they have trouble adjusting to a nonsegregated industrial setting?

"None whatsoever," says Mr. Becker.

If a small company named Dixie can put a crimp in the poverty cycle, large corporations could help to break it. One searches for evidence of corporate commitment and does not find it. Instead, there is tokenism in black hiring, evasion of legal responsibilities and sometimes behavior that seems to make neither good sense nor good business. For example, MacMillan-Bloedel, Inc. prevented Wilcox County from getting a $5 million Federal grant to build an access bridge to its plant because it failed to sign a standard nondiscrimination pledge.

MacMillan-Bloedel had already been the beneficiary of a tax-exempt $70 million bond issue floated by Wilcox County to induce the company to erect pulp and plywood facilities there. A river had to be crossed to enable employees to reach the plant. The Federal Economic Development Administration offered the $5 million if the job pledge were signed, and even Wilcox County (long a vigorous opponent of civil rights activity) was agreeable. But MacMillan-Bloedel was not. The company viewed the pledge as an abridgement of its hiring prerogatives with industrial relations manager Horace Hamby Jr. explaining that his firm wants to hire "without any assistance or without any artificial restraints or interference." Hiring thusly, it has no Negro clerical help and no Negro supervisors although it is in partnership with a Government contractor, United Fruit, supplying it with banana box material. The State of Alabama, which cannot find money for child welfare, found $5 million for the bridge. Under law, of course, MacMillan-Bloedel is expected to comply with antidiscrimination law no matter who pays for the span. But the company will cross that bridge when it comes to it.

So the record of the hearing goes, the body of testimony negative, the weight of statistics oppressive. But if the record is filled with failure, it is also a receptacle of passionate commitment by some black men and white men that failure is not irrevocable. The Poor People's Campaign planned by the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was getting underway as the Montgomery testimony accumulated. Hosea Williams, one of Dr. King's lieutenants in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, came to tell it like it was and what it must be.

". . . the society or the system has overplayed one part of the Scriptures," he says. "That which reads, 'You are your brother's keeper.' And poor people have been kept so long that we are not able to keep ourselves. And we are asking for an opportunity to keep ourselves, to break that cycle of poverty, to break that cycle of illiteracy, to break that cycle of illegitimacy, to break that cycle of crime.

"There are jailhouses that are filled with black men and poor whites in this Nation. Not because they are black or poor white, but mainly because the father of that home does not make enough money to buy that boy decent clothes and give him a little spending change. So he falls out of school being ashamed of his run-over shoes or his ragged pants, and then he starts stealing from the five-and-dime store, stealing from the grocery store. He ends up robbing, he ends up lying and thieving and cheating, he ends up in a life of crime—good minds that could be productive, minds that might find the cure for cancer, minds that might find the cure for cardiac and other dreadful diseases.

Hosea Williams calls for programs to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy

"We are not saying in our Poor People's Campaign that the Rockefellers and the Kennedys and the Fords should not be millionaires. But we are certainly saying that while there are millionaires, we must not have the Buttermilk Bottoms in Atlanta, Georgia; we must not have the Watts in Los Angeles; we must not have the West Sides of Chicago or the Harlems of New York. . . . Because we feel in this country God has blessed it and there is enough resources in this country that every woman ought to be able to get pre-natal care. Every woman, if she so desires, ought to be able to stay home and raise her children rather than being driven out by a vicious, obsolete economic system every morning to leave her little children at home to raise themselves and she has to go over into other folks' homes and raise their children.

"The woman cannot stay home, thereby the man has no comfort to come home to. . . . And the men, both black and white, are forced to work for such menial wages, they are forced to come up and be reared with such kind of education until they have to be Uncle Toms all day long just to keep a raggedy job, to keep a roof over their head and some food in their family's belly. And not being able to be men all day, they come home at night and they scold their wives, or they beat their children to prove themselves—which is one of the innate desires of mankind—to be men."

Williams, one of those overrun by mounted possemen on Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge in 1965 and sojourner in Black Belt hamlets cartographers overlook, sums up what the Campaign is all about.

"Our Poor People's Campaign is a nonviolent program designed to help every man in this country find himself, love, understand, and respect himself. This is why a lot of people resort to violence and they resort to looting and they resort to burning and they resort to what we call the welfare system—because they have no respect for themselves, they are not allowed to understand themselves, particularly in the black community. Now all our program is designed to do is that every man in this country can get a job, one that he finds fulfillment and creativity in. . . . Our Poor People's Campaign is designed so that poor people in the South will understand this land is our land, and there's no such thing as a freedom land in a New York City or Chicago. . . . And we ask America, particularly in the absence of the Moses of our time, to please adhere to what we are calling for—a nonviolent, nationwide massive struggle to save America from burning herself to death, from looting herself to death. . . ."

Struggle inevitably involves upheaval and disruption—upheaval of old assumptions that time cloaks in the authority of natural law, disruption of ways of life so pleasantly familiar and rewarding to some men that they equate privilege with natural right. Many men of good will were affronted by the activism of the early civil rights movement, even as the current campaigns in Alabama and elsewhere raise the protest of "Too much, too fast" from those who have always had enough. Commission Vice Chairman Eugene Patterson, editor of the Atlanta Constitution, says of Mr. Williams after he has finished:

"He has spoken from his heart. And he has spoken as a man, and he has spoken responsibly and he has spoken to us as whites. Through the years, history shows that all of us have stayed just a little bit behind what was happening. I as a newspaper man, know this especially well . . . because what I have said is public record. But at the death of Dr. King I looked back over these twelve years to this city of Montgomery and I recognize that the bus boycott, which at the time disordered my society and disturbed me, had led—now in looking back, I recognize now it led me to see a man lead his children onto a bus and sit where he pleased. And I am glad.

"And when the sit-ins came to my city, they disordered my life and they disordered my city's life and they disturbed my peace and I was not altogether approving. In looking back I am a little ashamed and appalled that I ever made it necessary for a Negro father to take his children into a restaurant and fear anything, fear to drive down a highway and find a place where he could feed his child. I take no pride in that ever having been the case in my life. And the Freedom Rides disturbed me and I denounced them editorially from time to time. But I now, looking back, am a little ashamed that I ever sat in a waiting room while other men sat with their children in a separate waiting room.

"And so," Mr. Patterson concludes, "all I want this record to show . . . is that things do change, times do move, and men do learn. And for the nonviolence that Dr. King preached and that Mr. Williams has echoed here tonight, I suggest that this Nation should be profoundly thankful and should take up that hand of friendship and move forward together as men, as Americans."

When the last witness has been heard, the camera lights extinguished, and the steno machine stilled, a question hangs in the hearing room: Will anything come from all the words and the emotions behind them? The question applies not only to Alabama but to every State where people hunger for bread and thirst for justice. The Nation can no longer plead ignorance of need. The Commission and private groups in scores of similar hearings have shown what is wrong and indicated what must be done to set things right. And now it is up to the national will to answer the question articulated in Montgomery. An affirmative answer involves nothing less than an American commitment envisioned by attorney Erskine Smith when he testified:

". . . the creation of a society where all citizens may walk in dignity, eat a wholesome diet, sleep in a decent house, live in economic and social freedom, and finally to die a timely death unhurried by malnutrition and the lack of adequate medical services."

It is not very much to ask.

It will be everything to refuse.

10 Since the Hearing

A hearing that uncovers discrimination is only the beginning of a Government action aimed at creating equality where there is injustice. But it is easier to identify this goal than to achieve it. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights can recommend but it cannot enforce its recommendations. Soon after the Alabama hearing, the Commission sent 20 letters to 10 Federal agencies, calling attention to possible Federal law violations revealed by the testimony. There have been some results.

For example, the Government Printing Office (GPO) dispatched investigators to York, Alabama to examine employment practices at the McGregor Printing Corporation, a GPO contractor. McGregor had been sending job applications to York Mayor W. C. Grant for his evaluation. But witnesses had testified that the mayor warned applicants against participating in civil rights demonstrations. Now, the company has agreed to end its arrangement with him. It is also going to remodel duplicate plant restrooms that resulted in *de facto* segregation and to post signs saying that the new facilities are for *all* employees.

The General Services Administration's Office of General Counsel and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance (OFCC) both sent inspectors to Bellamy, Alabama where Negro workers have been living in segregated and inferior housing. OFCC also conducted a special compliance review at Dan River Mills in Greenville where witnesses had charged discriminatory employment practices existed. At this time, the Commission does not know what results these investigations may bring.

Finally, MacMillan Bloedel, Inc. in Wilcox County has agreed to sign an anti-job discrimination pledge with the Economic Development Administration. The company had balked until the Commission transmitted assurances from EDA that signing would not involve direct Federal supervision of company hiring practices.

The Commission cannot pretend that these small advances, in light of the enormous distrance that the hearing showed must be traveled, amount to any more than a cursory nod in the direction of equal opportunity. Concerned agencies must don 10 league boots if significant progress is going to be made. In field, factory, and classroom, black lives are being denied fulfillment each day that Federal law, designed to make society free and fair for all, is broken by public and private enterprise.

Beyond the arena of compliance of job statutes or Federal agency orders, there have been disquieting developments involving hearing witnesses. Commission representatives who contacted them in follow-up investigation report a number of them loathe to talk or cooperate in expanding disclosure of bias. There has been subtle harassment, difficult to pinpoint as far as actual threat, but enough to create in the witnesses' minds an intimidating atmosphere. Word comes back to them second and third hand of official white displeasure, there are suspicions of surveillance, fear of job reprisal. The Commission feels a moral responsibility toward its witnesses, beyond the legal protection guaranteed them. It will move quickly on evidence that the civil rights of any witness have been threatened because he stepped forth to speak truths that need telling about a part of American society that needs changing.

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : [illegible]